

THE ARGOSY

MAY 1900

THE WARDEN OF THE MARCHES

BY SYDNEY C. GRIER, AUTHOR OF "PEACE WITH HONOUR,"
"THE KINGS OF THE EAST," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER IX

WOUNDED HERO AND MINISTERING ANGEL

ARE we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part? never!
Till thou, the lover, know; and I, the knower,
Love——"

read Mabel, and paused, since it was evident that her auditor desired to give utterance to a reflection appropriate to the occasion.

"It has always seemed to me," said Mr. Burgrave, "that in this meeting between Paracelsus and Aprile the poet has typified for all time the union of the masculine and feminine elements in human nature. Woman, the creature of feeling; man, the creature of reason; neither complete without the other. Before perfection can be attained, the lover must learn to know, the knower to love."

"All women are not creatures of feeling," said Mabel.

"But you would scarcely say that any woman was a creature of reason? Such a—a person would not be a woman. She would be a monstrosity."

"I mean that I don't think you can divide people by hard and fast lines in that way. It's quite possible for a man to be a creature of feeling, and I know women who are quite as reasonable as any man."

"Pardon me; you don't altogether follow my argument. I yield to no one in my admiration of the conclusions at which women arrive. They are often—one might say very often—astonishingly correct, but they are purely the result of a leap in the dark, and not of any process of reasoning. And since this is the case, no wise man can feel safe in acting upon them, while where the lady—as happens not infrequently

with her charming sex—is biassed by her personal feelings, they are liable to be dangerously deceptive.”

Mabel closed the book with a bang. “I wonder,” she said angrily, “at your talking in this way, as if I wasn’t horribly enough humiliated already. It was simply a chance that I didn’t identify the right men, and I *know* just the same that it was Bahram Khan who employed them.”

Mr. Burgrave raised his eyebrows slightly. “Indeed, my dear Miss North, you must pardon my maladroitness. I assure you that I had no intention whatever of alluding to the—let us say the disagreeable incident of yesterday. I was dealing purely with generalities.”

“But you yourself know perfectly well—though you pretend not to think so—that it was Bahram Khan,” persisted Mabel.

The Commissioner raised himself on his elbow and looked straight at her, and Mabel quailed. “And is it possible,” he demanded, “that you believe I am deliberately sheltering from justice, contrary to the dictates of my own conscience, a wretch who has dared to raise his hand against an Englishwoman—against a lady for whom I have the highest regard? No, Miss North, you must be good enough to withdraw those words. Even your brother and his wife are sufficiently just to believe me an honest man, although we differ on so many subjects.”

The stern grey eyes under the close-drawn brows seemed to pierce Mabel through and through. She half rose from her chair, then sat down again, and repressed with difficulty a threatened burst of tears.

“I—I didn’t mean that,” she faltered. “All I meant was that I didn’t see how you could think anything else when we are all so sure of it.”

“Allow me to say that I credit you with the sincerity you refuse to see in me. Your brother has a strong prejudice—there is no other word for it—against Bahram Khan, which he has transmitted to you, and you form your opinions upon his. I was perfectly willing to be convinced of the young man’s guilt by the merest shred of what could be called evidence, but none was produced. The case against him broke down completely. Would you have me withdraw my countenance from a man whom I conscientiously believe to be innocent, and ruin all his prospects, simply on the score of an unf—unsupported conviction of yours? No, Miss North, I won’t believe it of you. You must recognise that I am right.”

“But you said that our intuitions were wonderfully correct, and that your judgment was incomplete by itself,” urged Mabel.

“To be of any real value, the feminine intuition must be confirmed by the masculine judgment. Its use is purely supplementary.”

“Oh, Mr. Burgrave, you can’t really mean that! Why, my brother always consults his wife about everything, and he thinks very highly of her judgment.”

“Surely Major North is the best judge of his own affairs?” suggested Mr. Burgrave drily. “If he has confidence in his wife’s judgment, it

is only natural that he should wish to avail himself of it. Such would not be my case, I confess."

"But according to you, I ought to model my opinions on some one's," said Mabel,—“Dick's, I suppose—and that's just what you have been scolding me for doing.”

“Dick's?” said the Commissioner reflectively. “No, not Dick's, I think. That was not at all what I meant to imply, Miss North. And have I been scolding you, or is that another mistaken intuition? You know how gladly I would have accepted your view of Bahram Khan's guilt, if that had been possible?”

“I know you said so, and I hoped so much——” Mabel's eyes were full of tears.

“And do you know why that was?”

“No, indeed, I can't imagine.” She spoke hastily, scenting danger. The Commissioner smiled paternally.

“No? Then will you do me the favour to consider the matter? Ask yourself why I was willing, even anxious, to be converted from my own opinion. When you have arrived at the answer, I shall know.”

He smiled at her again from his pillows, but Mabel muttered something incoherent and fled.

“I don't know what to do!” she cried, in the seclusion of her own room. “Does he think I am a baby or a little schoolgirl? If he wants to propose, why can't he do it straight out, and take his refusal like a man? I know how to manage that sort of thing. But to break the idea to me gradually in this way, as if I was—oh, I don't know what—a sort of fairy that must be handled gently for fear it should vanish into thin air—it's insufferable! And the worst of it is, I can't quite make out how to stop it. I seem somehow to have got myself into his power.”

To see as little of Mr. Burgrave as possible, and to keep the conversation to safe subjects when she did meet him, was the course which naturally suggested itself, and Mabel did her best to carry it out, but, to her dismay, it did not appear to produce any effect. She had even a distinct feeling that it was just what Mr. Burgrave had expected. Moreover, it was extremely difficult to put into practice. Now that the operation had been performed on the patient's knee, he was allowed, with the leg fixed immovably in a splint, to be lifted on a couch, and thus to spend his days in the society of his hosts. Dick was out as much as ever, and when Georgia was busy, it was obviously Mabel's duty to entertain the invalid. It is sad to relate that when escape proved impossible, she was reduced to assuming an intense interest in the study of Browning, toiling through *Sordello* with astonishing patience. But if any valid excuse offered itself for leaving Mr. Burgrave to his own reflections, she embraced it gladly, and when the arrival in the neighbourhood of one of the nomadic tribes brought a sudden rush of patients to Georgia, she volunteered at once to help her to deal with them.

The surgery in which Georgia received her visitors was a building standing by itself in the compound, and approached by a special gate in the wall, so that the ladies might wait upon their doctor without fear of encountering any rude masculine gaze. Besides this precaution, when the wives of any of the chief men came to the surgery, they brought a youth with them as attendant, who mounted guard over a motley array of slippers at the door, and formed an additional security against profane intrusion. Inside, Georgia dealt with the cases individually in a small room at one end, while in the large room the visitors sat on the floor in rows, looking at the pictures on the walls, or listening casually to the Biblewoman, trained by Miss Jenkins at the Bab-us-Sahel Mission, who sat among them and read or talked. At the other end was another small room, where a patient and her friends were occasionally accommodated when Georgia had any special reason for wishing to keep the case under her own eye, and the husband was more than usually indulgent. Here there stood a spring bedstead, which was never used, but which the women made up parties to inspect, personally conducted by Rahah. There was a history attaching to this object of pilgrimage. Two years before, a lady globe-trotter of exalted rank, in the course of an adventurous flying visit to the frontier, had spent a night at the Norths', and been stirred to enthusiasm by Georgia's quiet but far-reaching work among the women. Her Grace deplored sympathetically the absence of a proper hospital, and offered to put her London drawing-room at Mrs. North's disposal during her next visit home, that she might plead for funds to establish one. Georgia pointed out, however, that the smallness of the town, and the uncertain character of the wanderings of the tribes, would probably result in leaving the hospital empty for eleven months out of the year, while if Dick should be transferred to another post, its *raison d'être* would be gone. The Duchess was disappointed, but not crushed. Would Mrs. North allow her to send a gift, just one, to the surgery as it stood at present? She could not bear to think of the terrible discomfort the poor sick women must suffer.

Georgia consented, and after a time the gift arrived, coming up-country at a vast expenditure of toil and money. It was a regulation hospital bed, the very latest patent, which could roll itself the wrong way like a bucking horse, stand up on end, kneel down like a camel, dislocate itself in unexpected places, and perform other acrobatic feats, all by turning a handle. Rahah sat before it in silent admiration for a whole morning, occasionally pressing the wires gently down for the pleasure of seeing them rise again. When she had drunk in this delight sufficiently, she ventured to put the bedstead through its paces, rushing to summon her mistress in joyful awe at each new trick she discovered. But at present her enjoyment was incomplete. To be perfect, the bed needed a patient to occupy it, and at last one was brought in by her friends, crippled by some rheumatic affection. Rahah herself laid her on the bed, only to behold her leap from it immediately with the

strength of perfect health. There was an evil spirit in the bed, she declared. All other beds sank when you lay down upon them, this one rose up. And, in spite of the wonderful cure of this first and only case, the bed was never occupied again. It was talked of all along the frontier, the women came for miles to see it, and watched in shuddering delight while Rahah showed them what it could do, but it was only very rarely that a heroine could be found bold enough even to touch it with a finger, and meanwhile the patients continued to sleep on their mats or their charpoys.

On this particular morning Rahah was exhibiting the wonders of the bed to a party of new arrivals, and Mabel was deputed to see that the patients were admitted into Georgia's sanctum in proper order, and only one at a time. Seeing that they were all comfortably seated facing the Biblewoman, she thought it would be best to begin with those nearest the door, thus going through the whole assemblage methodically. The women, on the other hand, considered that the worst cases ought to be seen first, and each woman was firmly convinced that her own case was the worst of all. Hence arose an uproar, in which the sympathising friends accompanying each would-be patient joined with all the force of their lungs, besieging the unfortunate Mabel, who could not understand a word, with a tumult of protests, contradictions, and gesticulations. At last one woman, who carried a baby, was seized with a bright idea. Flinging away a fold of her veil from the child's face, she held it out to Mabel, exhibiting the awful condition of its eyes, which were almost sightless from neglected ophthalmia, as an incontestable proof of her right to the first place. The hint was not lost upon the other women, and in a moment Mabel was surrounded by sights from which she recoiled in horror. At first she was too much appalled to move, as each woman displayed triumphantly the urgency of her own need, and then she turned sick and faint. The agglomeration of so many miseries was too much for her. Rahah, returning at the moment, left the door open, and this gave Mabel courage to escape. Pressing her hands over her eyes, she burst through the astonished crowd, drank in a draught of pure fresh air, and then fairly ran across the compound and back to the house. Mounting the steps with difficulty, she staggered and caught at the rail to steady herself, only avoiding a fall by a wild clutch at one of the pillars when she got to the top. An exclamation of concern reached her ears, and she became dimly conscious that Mr. Burgrave was making desperate efforts to rise from his couch.

"You are ill, Miss North! What is it? You don't mean to say that another attempt has been made——?"

"To carry me off? Oh no, not quite so near home." Mabel laughed a little, and as she began to see more clearly, noticed how the remorseful anxiety in his face gave place to unfeigned relief. "No, I'm not ill, only silly and faint."

"Try a whiff of this, then." He passed her a bottle of salts. "I

was allowed to revive myself with it when my doctors had been investigating the inside of my knee a little more closely than was pleasant."

"Oh, don't!" cried Mabel faintly. "I never want to hear a doctor mentioned again."

"Why, what has happened? Has Mrs. North turned vivisectionist?"

"No, of course not. It was only that I was helping her with her patients, and they had such awful things the matter with them that I—well, I ran away."

"And very wisely. Do I understand that Mrs. North exposed you to the sight of these horrors? It is monstrous!"

"She didn't ask me to come; I offered to help her."

"In the hope of pleasing her, of course. It is all the same. In the abundant strength of mind and body that she possesses, she forgets that other people are more delicately organised than herself. I am amazed at her lack of consideration."

"I won't have you say such things about Georgia!" cried Mabel. "She is the best and dearest woman I know."

"I honour your enthusiasm. I myself have the highest possible esteem for Mrs. North, but she is a little too strenuous for my taste."

"I wouldn't have her the least bit different. I wish I was like her, instead of being so silly and cowardly."

"No, Miss North, let me beg of you not to wish that. I would not have *you* different. Your sister-in-law's tastes and her past experiences account for many—er—remarkable points in her character, but believe me, your true friends would rather see in you this womanly shrinking from the sight of suffering than a bold determination to relieve it."

"I hope I may consider you one of those true friends?" Mabel tried to infuse a tone of strong sarcasm into her voice.

"I hope you may. It is difficult, is it not, to feel confidence in one who differs on so many points from Mrs. North and her husband? But this is a question upon which we will not enter—yet."

"Could I say I would enter upon it at once?" Mabel demanded angrily of herself when she had made her escape. "Somehow he gets such an advantage over me by putting me down in that lofty way, and yet I don't know how to stop it. The idea of his daring to criticise Georgie to me!"

But Mr. Burgrave was even bolder than Mabel thought him. Returning the next morning from a ride with Fitz Anstruther, she was greeted by Georgia with a laugh as she mounted the steps.

"Oh, Mab, I have been having quite a scolding, and all about you! It's clear that I am not worthy to have such a sister-in-law."

"Georgie! you don't mean that Mr. Burgrave has been rude enough——"

"Now, Mab, you know better than that. It would be impossible

for him to be rude. He simply took me to task, very calmly and mildly, about my negligence towards you, to whom I stand in the place of a mother——”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Mabel, her face scarlet.

“So he said. It seems I am lacking in the tenderness which should be lavished upon you. Our rough frontier life ought to be tempered for you by all sorts of sweetness and light which I have made no attempt to provide. I have been inconsiderate in bringing you into contact with the revolting details of my professional work, and so on. Do forgive me, Mab. I really didn’t mean to do all these dreadful things, but you did want to make acquaintance with realities, you know.”

“That man is getting unbearable!” broke from Mabel. “I shall speak to him—— No, I shan’t,” she added wearily; “it’s no good. He gets the better of me every way. Can’t you put a little cold poison into his medicine, Georgie? Surely it’s a case in which the end would justify the means.”

She went indoors with rather a forced laugh, and Fitz, who had been looking out over the desert without appearing to notice what was being said, turned round suddenly to Georgia.

“Can you honestly expect me to stand all this much longer, Mrs. North?”

“All what?” asked Georgia, in astonishment.

“The Commissioner’s intolerable assumption. Any one would think he was Miss North’s guardian, or her father, or even——with a fierce laugh——“her husband. What right has he to take it upon himself to defend her?—as if she needed any defending against you! It’s nothing but his arrogant impudence.”

“But still”——Georgia spoke with some hesitation——“how does it affect you?”

“Oh, Mrs. North, you needn’t pretend not to have noticed. You know as well as I do that the Commissioner and I are both——er——well, we are both awfully gone on Miss North, and he isn’t playing fair. You have seen it, haven’t you?”

“I have indeed, but I hoped that you hadn’t quite found out what your real feelings were.”

“Surely you must have thought me a hopeless idiot? I found out all about it the day Miss North had that fall from her horse.”

“So long ago as that? Why, you had scarcely known her a fortnight!”

“What does it signify if I had only known her an hour? It is the kind of feeling one can only have for one woman in one’s life.”

“But you didn’t say anything?” asked Georgia anxiously.

Fitz laughed shamefacedly. “No, I have said nothing even yet. The fact is, it seemed a desecration to think of it. She is so lovely, so sweet, so far above me in every way! Oh, Mrs. North, I could rave about her for hours.”

"And you shall," was the cordial but unexpected response, "as often as you like, and I will listen patiently, provided that you still say nothing to her."

"No, no; things can't go on in this way. You see, the Commissioner has changed all that. He goes in and fights for his own hand in the most barefaced way, and I must get my innings too. After all, though it sounds horribly low to say it, I did kill the fellow that was carrying her off, and bring her back."

"Of course you did. If that was all, you certainly deserve to win her."

"Yes; but then the Commissioner scores in having got hurt. He sees her for ever so long every day, and she talks to him and reads to him, and lets him prose away to her, and no wonder he thinks he is making splendid running. I only wish I had got hurt too."

"Do you really?" asked Georgia, with meaning in her tone.

"No, Mrs. North, you're right; I don't. If we had both been hurt, there would have been no one with any chance of catching up the rascals. Whether she takes him or me in the end, I did save her, at any rate."

"Good," said Georgia encouragingly. "I like that spirit."

"Well, now, you know how things stand. You see what advantage the Kumpsioner Sahib is taking of her gratitude and your kindness, and you can guess how I feel about it. Tell me candidly, do you think I have the slightest chance? Why did you say that you hoped I did not understand what my own feelings meant?"

"Simply this, that a waiting game is your only chance. Since you ask me, I will speak plainly. You are younger than Mabel, you know; it is undeniable, unfortunately"—as Fitz made a gesture of impatience—"and Dick and I have got into the way of treating you like a son or a younger brother. We haven't taken you seriously, and I am very much afraid Mabel doesn't either. Mr. Burgrave holds a very high position, and he is a man of great distinction. We on this frontier cherish an unfortunate prejudice against him, of course, but elsewhere he is considered most charming and fascinating. How can she but feel flattered by his homage? And he has undoubtedly acquired a great influence over her; I can't help seeing that. And yet I can't make out that she cares for him, and I have watched her closely."

"Well, that is one grain of comfort, at any rate," said Fitz disconsolately. "But he is not going to carry her off without my having the chance to say a word to her, I can tell him."

Georgia looked up anxiously. "Don't throw away your only hope," she entreated. "What you have to do is to make yourself necessary to her. You have been managing very well hitherto—always ready to do anything she wanted. Make yourself so useful to her as a friend that she would rather keep you as a lover than lose you."

"Oh, I say, Mrs. North, you don't flatter a man's vanity much!"

"Yes, I do. At least, I am showing that I think you capable of a great deal of self-effacement for the sake of winning her."

"And if the Commissioner carries her off meanwhile?"

"I don't think he will, provided you let her alone. But if you worry her to have you, she may accept him just to be rid of your attentions. And then there will be nothing to be done but to bear it like a man."

"You don't disguise the taste of your medicines much, Mrs. Dr. North. I'll chew the bitter pill as I ride, and try to look as if I liked it. I was to meet the Major at the old fort at ten o'clock. It's awfully good of you to have listened so patiently to my symptoms, and prescribed for me so fully."

He ran down the steps and rode away, arriving at the fort a little late, to find that Dick was discussing with Colonel Graham the business on which he had come. A series of small thefts, irritating rather than serious, had taken place on the club premises of late, and the question of their prevention in future was exercising the minds of the members. As Fitz rode up, Dick and Colonel Graham were descending to the courtyard after making the round of the walls, and the former signed to him to wait where he was.

"I never remember such a succession of petty depredations before," said Colonel Graham. "The natives must be in a very unsettled state."

"I'm not sorry these things have happened," returned Dick. "In fact, I'm glad of them."

Colonel Graham glanced at his face. "What have you got in your head?" he asked.

"Simply this. I suppose you think, as I do, that the thief got in by climbing over the wall, while the watchman was busy guarding the gateway, and never thought of any other way of entering?"

"That's my idea. In a climate like this, mud-brick is bound to go very soon if it isn't looked after, and for years the rain has washed it down into these rubbish-heaps that are as good as flights of steps. What with the grass and bushes growing all about, it's as easy as possible to get in. I could do it myself."

"Then you agree that it would be as well to make it harder? I propose that we call a club-meeting and invite subscriptions for the purpose of putting the walls into proper repair. Otherwise we shall soon have the place down on our heads."

"But that sort of thing will take a long time to organise."

"That doesn't signify, since it is only to keep the natives from thinking there's anything up. So far as I see, there's no particular reason why you and I shouldn't head the subscription-list with a thousand rupees each—so that the most pressing work may be done at once, or why that two thousand rupees shouldn't last out better than such a sum ever did before."

"Good! Are we to take Runcorn into our confidence?"

"We may as well. He will be useful in deciding what it's possible to do in the time. Happily, he and the canal people have kept the wall overlooking the water in tolerable repair. As for the other sides,

we must clear away the rubbish from the foot of the walls, and build up the parapets where the bricks have weathered away. The bushes must go, of course, and the ramparts be made a safe promenade for the ladies. The tower stairs are tolerably dangerous, and it will be quite natural to have them seen to, and the floors and loopholes may as well be looked after while we are about it, though we shall never get a satisfactory flanking fire without rebuilding the whole thing. I shall take it upon myself to present the place with a new gate—not obtrusively martial in appearance, but with a certain reserve strength about it. My wife will think me a terrible Vandal for spoiling the beautiful ruin her father left behind him, but it's obvious that the *chaukidar* will be able to look after the place better when there's a gate to shut."

"I should say there won't be much ruin left when we have done with it," said Colonel Graham. "It's a mere coincidence that our largest storehouse turns out to be in the way of the canal extension works, and has been condemned. There would be no harm in storing the corn and a few other little trifles in the vaults under the club-house, and it would give us an excuse for posting a sentry here at night."

"Good," said Dick, in his turn. "What accomplished deceivers we shall be by the time this is over!"

"You think things are in a bad way?"

"What do you think yourself?"

"I? I have no opinion. You have been on this frontier much longer than I have, and you are in political charge. I have seen enough to know that there's something queer going on, that's all."

"I'll tell you one thing that's going on. Five times in the last fortnight I have received secret information of tribal gatherings which were to be held without my knowledge. Of course I made a point of turning up, and behaving just as if I had received an invitation in due form."

"Well, that was all right, so far."

"Yes, but think of the gatherings that I did not hear of. What went on at them?"

"I see; it looks bad. What do you propose doing?"

"What ought to be done is to revive the martial law proclamation, which has been in abeyance for the last four years. But I am not supreme here just now."

"Surely the Commissioner would not interfere with the exercise of your authority?"

"The Commissioner has read so many horrors about the Khemistan frontier that he is pleased every morning to find himself alive, and the house not burnt over his head. I believe he regards the improvement as due to his own presence here, and at the same time considers it an additional proof that Khemistan may now be governed like all the other provinces. If I had things my own way, my very first move would be to deport Burgrove, preferably to Simla, where he could both be happy himself and the cause of happiness in others, but as it is, he will probably deport me."

"Then you believe he has some trick on hand too?"

"I'm sure of it. He is in constant communication with Government. Beardmore and his clerks come to him every day,"—Beardmore was the Commissioner's private secretary, and a man after his employer's own heart, of the type that considers it has successfully surmounted a crisis when it has drawn up a state-paper on the subject—"and he is busy with them for hours, concocting a report on the state of the frontier, I suppose. When that is finished, we may expect the blow."

"What is it that you expect exactly? A friend of mine at headquarters tells me there's a persistent rumour——"

"That they intend to withdraw the subsidy, and cut loose from Nalapur? Just so. And that means the deluge for us. The blessed word Non-Intervention will bring about the need for intervention, as usual."

"Our people will rise?"

"Not at first. Bahram Khan will probably remove his uncle quietly, and in order to still any unpleasant rumours, encourage raids on us, which will serve the further purpose of awakening the appetite for blood and loot. The Sardars will be made to believe that we have drawn back in order to advance better, and that their only chance is to make the first move. They will cross the border, and our people will join them."

"And we shall be thankful for the fort? North, in view of all this, what do you say to sending the ladies down to Bab-us-Sahel for a while?"

"I don't know," answered Dick hesitatingly. "I thought of suggesting to my wife that she should go down there and do some shopping."

"But you fancied she'd see through it? Probably. She was born and bred here, and knows the weather-signs as well as you do. What's the good of trying to throw dust in her eyes? Put it to her plainly that, as things are, you would feel much happier if she was away, and she'll go like a shot. Your sister and my Flora will go with her, and they will be a pleasant party."

"She won't like going when there's no sign of danger, and it might precipitate the crisis, too. Perhaps when Burgrave launches his thunderbolt——"

"If you could only get him to escort the ladies down at once, we might pull through yet."

"No fear," said Dick bitterly; "until he's done his worst."

CHAPTER X

GAINING A LOVER AND KEEPING A FRIEND

NO bathing to-day, Mab!" laughed Georgia, meeting Mabel in her riding-habit in the hall.

"You mean we can't ride? Why not?"

"Now, you look just like the prehistoric lady in the picture!

Because there's a dust-storm coming on. I meant to tell you, but you rushed away from the breakfast-table so quickly. I have been hurrying Dick off, that he may get to the office before it begins."

"But how do you know there's going to be a dust-storm at all? I thought that before they came on the sky was copper-coloured, and the air got like an oven?"

"Well, the sky is getting black, as you can see. Dust-storms are not confined to the hot weather here; they come all the year round. It's the merest chance that there hasn't been one yet since you arrived."

"How horrid that it should just come to-day!" said Mabel snappishly. "I told Mr. Anstruther I was tired of riding Simorgh, and he must really bring Laili back. He said he couldn't be sure she was cured yet, and I told him he might use a leading-rein if he liked, but that I must ride her. We weren't going at all near the frontier, or anywhere in the direction of Dera Gul."

"My beloved Mab, dust-storms don't respect British territory, and if you had once been out in one you wouldn't wish to repeat the experience, even if you were in a position to do it. Go and take your habit off, and when Mr. Anstruther comes, I will tell him to send the horses to the stable, and wait here until the storm is over. Then you will have him to talk to. See that the servants shut all your windows."

But when Mabel emerged from her darkened room into the lighted hall again, there was added to the disappointment she felt on being cheated of her ride a certain amount of ill-humour, due to another untoward occurrence. The ayah Tara had chosen this particular morning for passing in review all her mistress's best gowns and hats, with an eye to any little repairs that might be necessary, and having taken the garments out of their respective boxes and arranged them all over the room, had sat down to contemplate them for a while before setting to work. She was not accustomed to the peculiarities of the Khemistan climate, and the gathering darkness seemed to her only the precursor of a thunderstorm. Hence, when the first gust of raging wind whirled a cloud of gritty dust through the open windows, she was as much astonished as Mabel herself, who was entering the room at the moment, and was almost knocked down. Both mistress and maid flew at once to shut the windows, but in the wind and darkness this was by no means easy, and before it could be accomplished, the dust lay thick all over the room and its contents. Such a *contretemps* was enough to provoke a saint, Mabel told herself angrily, when she had left the weeping Tara to do what she could to repair the mischief; and it would be useless to deny that she was feeling very cross indeed as she entered the drawing-room with a bundle of letters in her hand.

The shutters were closed and the lamps lighted as if it had been night, and the dust could be heard pattering like hail outside whenever the howling of the wind would allow any other sound to become audible. Fitz Anstruther was sitting near the fireplace, looking through an old

magazine, and Mabel, rejecting his suggestion of a game of chess, seated herself at the writing-table, saying that she had letters to write for the mail. She found it difficult to write, however, for although she would not look up, she could not help being conscious that her companion's eyes were fixed much oftener on her than on the printed page before him. The fact infected her with a nervousness to which she was quite a stranger, often as men had gazed at her before, and at last she could bear it no longer.

"Wouldn't you like something to do?" she demanded suddenly, turning round and catching him in the act of looking at her, but he was equal to the occasion.

"Something to do? Anything in the world, Miss North! May I write your letters for you? I'm sure the Major would give me a good character as a scribe, and your friends would be so surprised to find you had set up a private secretary."

"Thanks, but I'm not in the mood for letter-writing, and certainly not for dictating."

"Then may I hold a skein of silk for you to wind? That's the sort of thing they set a mere man down to in books."

"I don't use silk of that sort. Is there nothing you would like to do?"

"Yes, awfully. I should like to talk to you."

"I think I shall go and read to the Commissioner," severely.

"It would only be wasting sweetness on the desert air. He's perfectly happy at this moment, with Beardmore plotting treason in a confidential report, and two *chi-chis* and four *babus* writing away for him as hard as they can write, and he wouldn't appreciate an interruption."

"*Chi-chis*?" Mabel raised her eyebrows.

"Eurasians, I mean—those two black-and-tan clerks of his."

"I suppose you are judging Mr. Burgrave by yourself when you say that he would be happier if I kept away?"

"I? Oh no; I was judging him by himself. The Kumpsioner Sahib doesn't think ladies and affairs of state go well together, you know."

"Indeed?" Mabel was bitterly conscious that this was her chief grievance against the Commissioner, but she had no intention of confessing it.

"Why, do you mean that he talks shop to you? What an important person you are, Miss North! Think of having the run of the Commissioner's state secrets! But, of course, one can see why he does it. How unfairly people are dealt with in this world! Why have I no official secrets to confide? Supposing I spy round and amass some, may I expound them to you for three or four hours a day?"

"What nonsense!" said Mabel, with some warmth. "Mr. Burgrave is only teaching me to appreciate Browning."

"And you fly to state secrets for relief in the intervals! Miss North, won't you teach me to appreciate Browning? I'll wire to Calcutta for the whole twenty-nine volumes at once, if you will."

"I really have no time to waste——"

"Oh, how unkind! Consider the crushing effect of your words. Do you truly think me such an idiot that teaching me would be waste of time?"

Mabel laughed in spite of herself. "You didn't let me finish my sentence," she said. "I was going to say that it would only be a waste of your time too, to try to learn anything from me."

"Never, Miss North! Say the word, and I enrol myself your pupil for ever."

"You must have a very poor opinion of me as a teacher, I'm afraid, if you think it would take a lifetime to turn you out a finished scholar."

"How you do twist a man's words! The fault would be on my side, of course. I was going to say the misfortune, but it would be good fortune for me," Fitz added in a low voice.

("Now if I don't keep my head, something will happen!" said Mabel to herself, conscious that the atmosphere was becoming electric.) Aloud she remarked lightly. "Ah, you have given yourself away. Do you think I would have anything to do with a pupil who was determined not to learn?"

"Not if he has learnt all you can teach him?" demanded Fitz, rising and standing over her. "There is nothing more for me to learn. I want to teach you."

"Oh, thanks! but I haven't offered myself as a pupil," with a nervous laugh.

"No, it's the other way about. I want to teach you to care for me as you have made me care for you. Well, not like that, perhaps; I couldn't expect it. But you do care for me a little, don't you?"

"Mr. Anstruther!—I am astonished—" stammered Mabel.

"Are you? What a bad teacher I must be! I know how all the other men are wild after you, of course, but I thought it was different, somehow, between you and me. I have felt something of the sort from the very first. I love you, Mabel, and I think you like me rather, don't you? You have been so awfully kind in letting me do things for you, and it has driven all the rest mad with envy. I believe I could make you love me in time, if you would let me try. There's nothing in the whole world I wouldn't do for you. If only you won't shut your heart up against me, I think you'd have to give in."

He was holding her hands tightly as he spoke, and Mabel trembled under the rush of his words. Was she going to faint, or what was the meaning of that wild throbbing at her heart? Clearly she must act decisively and at once, or this tempestuous young man would think he had taken her by storm. She summoned hastily the remnants of her pride.

"Please go and sit down over there," she said, freeing her hands from his grasp. "How can I talk sensibly when you are towering over me like that?" Fitz did not offer to move, and by way of redressing the inequality, she rose also, supporting herself by laying a shaking hand upon the writing-table. "I am so very sorry and—and astonished about this. I had no idea."

"None?" he asked.

"I mean—I never thought it would go as far as this—that you would be so persistent—so much in earnest."

"A new light on the matter, evidently." As she grew more agitated, Fitz had become calmer.

"Because it's impossible, you know."

"Excuse me; I don't know anything of the kind."

"You are a great deal younger than I am, for one thing."

"Barely three years, and it's a fault that will mend."

"No, it won't. As you get older, I shall get older too, and if there is a thing I detest, it is to see a young man with an elderly wife. I could not endure to feel that I was growing old while you were still in the prime of life. You would hate it yourself, too, and you would leave off caring for me, and we should both be miserable."

"Try me!" said Fitz, with a light in his eyes that she could not face.

"And then there's another thing," she went on hurriedly. "I know it sounds horrid to say it, but—it's not only that three years—you are so young for your age. I'm not a reasonable creature like Georgia; I simply long to be made to obey, whether I like it or not. I feel that I want a master, but I could make you do what I liked."

"Could you? But perhaps I could make you do what I liked. Look at me for a moment, please."

But Mabel covered her eyes. "No, I won't. That sounds as if I had been inviting you to master me, which wouldn't be at all what I mean. Please understand, once for all, that I don't care for you enough to marry you."

"Very well. But you will. If I am young, there's one good thing about that—I can wait."

"It's no good whatever your thinking that I may change."

"That is my business, please. I presume my thoughts are my own? and I feel that I shall teach you to love me yet."

"I didn't think," said Mabel indignantly, "that you were the kind of man to persecute a woman who had refused you."

"Don't be afraid. I shall not persecute you; I shall simply wait."

"And try to make me miserable by looking doleful? I call that persecution. No, really, if you are going to be so disagreeable, I shall have to speak to my brother, and ask him to get you transferred somewhere else, and that would be very bad for your prospects."

In Mabel's estimation this threat sounded extremely telling, but to Fitz, who had declined excellent posts in other parts of the province,

rather than quit the frontier, which grows to have such a strange fascination for every Khemistan man, it was less terrible.

"Don't trouble to appeal to the Major, Miss North. I assure you that you won't find it necessary."

"But am I to be kept in continual dread of having to discuss this—this unpleasant subject? I think it is very unkind of you," said Mabel, with tears in her eyes, "for I had come to like you so much as a friend, and you were always so useful, and now——"

"And now I intend to be quite as useful, and I hope to be just as much your friend as before. Let us make a bargain. You may feel quite safe. I won't attempt to renew the unpleasant subject without your leave."

Mabel looked at him in astonishment. "But I should never give you leave, you know," she said.

"Very well. Then the subject will never be renewed. I am content to wait."

"But what is the good of waiting when I have told you——"

"Come, I don't think you can deny me that consolation, can you, when you have everything else in your own hands? Is it a bargain?"

"It doesn't seem fair to let you go on hoping——"

"That's my own look-out," he said again. "If your friend is always ready when you want him, surely he may be allowed to cherish his foolish hopes in private—provided that he never lets them show?"

"Very well, then," said Mabel reluctantly. "But I don't feel——"

"If I am satisfied, surely you may be?"

The entrance of a servant to unbar the shutters made an answer unnecessary. In the deep absorption of the last half-hour, neither Fitz nor Mabel had noticed that the dust had ceased to patter and the wind to howl. The storm was over, and once again there was daylight, although the rain was descending in torrents.

"Mab, the Commissioner was asking for you," said Georgia, pausing at the door. "He has finished his morning's work, and wanted to know if you were ready for some Browning."

"Oh yes, I'll go at once," said Mabel, anxious only to escape from Fitz and the memory of their agitating conversation. It had shaken her very much, she felt, and this made her angry with him. What right had he to disturb her so rudely, and make her feel guilty, when she had done nothing? It was with a sensation of relief that she met Mr. Burgrave's benignant smile, and returned his morning greeting. He did not appear to notice anything unusual in her manner, and she took up the book and turned hastily to the page where they had left off, while Mr. Burgrave, pencil in hand, settled himself comfortably among his cushions, ready to call attention to any beauties she might miss in reading the lines. If he was like Fitz, in that his eyes were fixed on the fair head bent over the pages of *Pippa Passes*, he was unlike Fitz in that their gaze escaped unnoticed.

"'You'll love me yet!—and I can marry——'" read Mabel, totally

unconscious of the havoc she was making of the poet's words, but her auditor almost sprang from his couch.

"No, no!" he cried. "I beg your pardon, Miss North, but the storm has shaken your nerves a little, hasn't it? Allow me," and he took the book from her hands, and read the poem aloud in a voice so full of feeling that it went to Mabel's heart.

"You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing;
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry
From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartful now; some seed
At least is sure to strike—"

What malign influence had brought the reading to this point at this particular moment? Fitz might have used those very words. Involuntarily Mabel rose, and stood at the edge of the verandah, looking out into the rain. Her eyes were filled with tears, but Mr. Burgrave was too much occupied with the poem to observe them. He read on—

"And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, maybe, like.

You'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet;
Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
What's death? You'll love me yet!"

Was the seed springing already? A tear splashed into the gritty dust that lay on the verandah-rail, and Mabel dashed her hand across her eyes in an agony of shame. What would Mr. Burgrave think? But before she could even reach her handkerchief, the book was thrown down, and Mr. Burgrave had seized his crutch, and was at her side.

"Mabel, my dear little girl!" he cried tenderly.

"Oh no, no; not you!" she gasped, horror-stricken.

"And why not, dearest? Forgive me for blundering so brutally. How could I know that the seed I dared to plant had blossomed already? I have watched it growing slowly day by day, so slowly that I was often afraid it had not struck at all, and now, when it is actually in full flower, I pass without seeing it, and bruise it in this heartless way. Forgive me, dear."

"Indeed, indeed, you are making a mistake!" cried Mabel, in a panic. "It really isn't what you think, Mr. Burgrave. I don't care for you in that way at all."

"My little girl must allow me to be the judge of that. I can read your heart better than you can yourself, dearest. Do you think I haven't noticed how naturally you turn to me for refuge against trouble and unkindness? It has touched me inexpressibly. Again and again you have sought sympathy from me, with the sweetest confidence."

"It's quite true!" groaned Mabel, seeing in a sudden mental vision all the occasions to which Mr. Burgrave referred.

"Of course it is, dear. You hadn't realised how completely you trusted me, had you? Other people thought—no, I won't tell you what they said—but I knew better. I was sure of you, you see."

"What did other people say?" asked Mabel, with faint interest.

"Er—well, it was a lady in the neighbourhood." Mabel's thoughts flew to Mrs. Hardy, and she shuddered. "She was good enough to warn me that you were—no, I will not say the word—that you were amusing yourself with me. She had noticed how inevitably we drew together, naturally enough, but she ascribed your sweet trustfulness to such vile motives as could never enter your head. I said to her, 'Madam, to defend Miss North against your suspicions would be to insult her. In a short time, when you realise their baselessness, you will suffer as keenly as you deserve for having entertained them.' I could trust my little girl, you see."

"Oh, you make me ashamed!" cried Mabel, abashed by the perfect confidence which this stern, self-sufficient man reposed in her. "Oh, Mr. Burgrave, do please believe I am not good enough for you. It makes me miserable to think how disappointed you will be."

"I should like to hear you call me Eustace," said Mr. Burgrave softly, unmoved by her protestations. It occurred to Mabel, with a dreadful sense of helplessness, that he regarded them only as expressing a suitable deprecation of the honour he purposed doing her.

"Well—please—Eustace—" But Mr. Burgrave kissed her solemnly on the forehead, and she could stand no more.

"It's too much! I'll come back presently," she gasped, and succeeded in escaping. As she fled through the hall, she met Georgia.

"Perhaps you'll be interested to know that I'm engaged to Mr. Burgrave, Georgie," she cried hysterically, before rushing into her own room and locking the door.

"The wretched man!" cried Georgia. "After all Dr. Tighe and I have done for his leg!"

"I didn't know Tighe had any grievance against him about this," grumbled Dick. He was sitting on the edge of the dressing-table, ruefully contemplating his boots, with his hands dug deep in his pockets. On ordinary occasions Georgia would have requested him, gently but firmly, to move, but now she was too much perturbed in mind to think of the furniture. Delayed in starting by the dust-storm, Dick had not returned from a hard day's riding until late at night, only to be confronted on the threshold, so to speak, by the triumphant Commissioner, and requested to give him his sister.

"Oh, but he would be on our side, of course," said Georgia. "Dick, I do think it is horrid of Mr. Burgrave to have proposed under present circumstances. It's as if he wanted to rob us of everything—even of Mab."

"No, he's doing us an honour. He all but told me so. But he really is absolutely gone on Mab. His whole face changes when he

speaks of her. Fact is, Georgie, if the man didn't come rooting about on our very own frontier, I couldn't help liking him. His consciousness of his own greatness is perfectly simple and sincere, and he cherishes no animosity against us for opposing his plans. He told me that he hoped political differences would make no break in our friendly intercourse— Hang it! this thing's giving way. Why in the world don't you have stronger tables?"

"Sit here," said Georgia, pointing to the wicker sofa. "Well, Dick?"

"Well? It's coming, old girl, coming fast, and he's mercifully trying to soften the blow to us."

Georgia looked round with a shiver. The shabby bungalow with its makeshift furniture was the outward and visible sign of the life-work which she and her husband had inherited from her father, and it was to be taken from them by the decree of the man who hoped that his arbitrary fiat would be no obstacle to their continuing to regard him as a friend.

"And what I think," Dick went on, "is that they had better be married as soon as possible, before Burgrave goes down to the coast again, and the blow falls."

"But, Dick," Georgia almost screamed, "you're giving her no time to repent."

"Repent? I'm not proposing to kill her. Surely it would be better for her to be married from this house than from a Bombay Hotel? Besides, we should have no further anxiety about her——"

"No further anxiety? Dick, if she marries him I shall never know another happy moment. She doesn't care a straw for him—it's a sort of fascination, that's all, a sort of deadly terror. I can't tell you what it's been like all day. She couldn't bear me to leave them alone, and there was he beaming at her, and not seeing it a bit. He thinks it's all right for her to be shy and tongue-tied, and not daring to meet his eye—the pompous idiot! Mab shy—and with a man! She's miserable—in fear of her life."

"No, no, Georgie, that's a little too tall. Mab is not a schoolgirl—to let herself be coerced into an engagement, and it won't do to stir her up to break it off. You mustn't go and abuse him to her. Be satisfied with relieving your feelings to me."

"Now, Dick, is it likely? Am I the person to give her an extra reason for sticking to him? If I abused him she would feel bound to defend him, and might even end by caring for him. I can't congratulate her, but she shall have every facility for seeing as much of him as she can possibly want."

"Vengeful creature!"

"No, that's not it. I have no patience with her."

"Ah, she has proved you a false prophet, hasn't she? That's unpardonable."

"She has done much worse. I'm perfectly convinced that she re-

fused the right man before accepting the wrong one. And though she doesn't deserve it, I think she ought to have time to set things right, if she can."

"Very well. Then the deluge will come first, that's all."

"How soon do you expect it?"

"Well, I gather from what the Commissioner says that his report is nearly done. As it is only a pretext for a predetermined move, they won't take long to consider it. The decision will be intimated to me, and I shall submit my resignation in return."

"And then we shall fold our tents like the Arabs, and silently steal away?"

"Not quite at once. We must stick on until they send up a man to replace me, and carry out the new policy. The worst of it will be that Ashraf Ali will know why I have resigned, and unless I can get him to keep quiet, he will think himself at liberty to break the treaty before our side does. If Bahram Khan once gets to know what's on hand, it's all up, for nothing will persuade the chiefs that we are not going to annex Nalapur, and repudiating the treaty as the first step to an invasion, and he will be there to lead them, if the Amir won't. I hope to goodness that Burgrave will have removed the light of his countenance from us before then, but I suppose that's sure to be all right. He would scarcely like to look as if he was hounding his intended brother-in-law out of the province. Unfortunately it's pretty certain that rumours of my impending departure will begin to get about in some mysterious manner as soon as his unfavourable report goes up. I'm inclined to think that he has a spy about him somewhere. By-the-bye, Georgie, who is the sweet-seller you've allowed to hang about the place lately?"

"I, Dick? He told me you had said he might come."

"Something fishy there, evidently. But he must have an accomplice inside."

"One of the Commissioner's Hindu clerks, perhaps."

"Possibly. Well, we'll deal with him to-morrow."

(To be continued.)

THE CONCLAVE OF 1740

THE details of a Papal Conclave, when details are obtainable, have a curious fascination even for Protestant laymen. The staging of the great drama is so elaborate, the actors—even the subordinates—seem so perfectly drilled, the interests involved are so enormous, that the eye, the taste, and the imagination are equally caught. The dénouement too appears to be worked out with great care. Just as in a good detective story suspicion is thrown on every character but the one who ultimately proves guilty, so it is impossible in most cases to predict upon which of the assembled cardinals the choice of his fellows will fall. Indeed, it has become a commonplace of Papal elections that he who enters the Conclave a Pope—*i.e.* in Turf language, the “favourite”—will leave it still a cardinal.

But in many cases details are wanting. In the interests of the successful and the unsuccessful candidates alike it is not always desirable that the world should be enlightened as to the exact reasons for their triumph or failure. Sometimes religious motives have determined the result, at others political exigencies, at others personal intrigues. Silence might well prove golden in any case, even if the most rigorous secrecy respecting the election had not been enjoined by Bull after Bull for several centuries. It is probable, as one writer avers, that a vast mass of information on the subject is to be found in the secret archives of the great Roman families. But these archives are jealously guarded, and the accounts of by far the greater number of Papal Conclaves, even if written, have never been published. Thus we seldom witness more than the opening scene and the final tableau. We see the assembling of the cardinals and their procession to the Vatican¹ on the ninth day. We watch them take leave of their friends. We hear the voice of the Master of the Ceremonies proclaiming for the third time “*Extra Omnes.*” And then the curtain falls till the moment, it may be months later, when the cardinal dean, the *doyen* of the Sacred College, steps out on to the great balcony and announces *Urbi et Orbi*, the Tidings of Great Joy, “*Habemus Pontificem.*”

Occasionally, however, while the play is still in progress, a corner of the curtain is lifted, either by one of the actors in the drama or by some inquisitive spectator, and we get a glimpse not merely of the grand finale, but of the events which have led up to it. One of these indiscretions has given us a lively picture of the Conclave of 1740.

In that year there was travelling in Italy Charles de Brosses, a brilliant young Frenchman of good family, who was already making a name for himself in literary circles. He is generally known as *Président de*

¹ On four occasions in this century, the Conclave has been held in the Quirinal.

Brosses, from the office which he subsequently held in the Parlement of Burgundy, and seems in later life to have turned his attention to scientific pursuits. It was this De Brosses with whom Voltaire had the famous dispute over the "forty cords of firewood"—one of those undignified squabbles about money or money's worth into which the thin-skinned philosopher was continually rushing—and Voltaire's consequent hostility was probably the cause of the President's exclusion from the Académie française. De Brosses had been educated at the newly-established University of Dijon, where—if we are to believe his biographer—he had mastered "history, sacred and profane, geography, philology, mythology, physics and metaphysics" (the collocation reminds one of Mr. Jorrocks's reason for calling his tandem wheeler Arterxerxes), besides several languages. His chief attention, however, both at and after leaving the University, was given to the study of the social and political history of republican Rome, and ten years later he determined to visit Italy.

His impressions of his tour are contained in two volumes of "Letters from Italy," which were carefully preserved by the various friends with whom he corresponded, but by his special desire not published till after his death. Being written merely as letters, without any idea that they would ever come under the eyes of any one outside his immediate circle, they have therefore all the charm of simplicity, and are free from commonplace and affectation alike. There can be little doubt, moreover, that they give a fairly accurate as well as an amusing picture of what the writer saw. His birth gave him the right of admission to the Courts of Naples and Turin. He had two audiences of Clement XII., who, though of great age, blind, and broken down by the malady which soon afterwards proved fatal, was yet in full possession of his alertness and wit. He paid his respects to the Old Pretender, who was treated at Rome with the consideration due rather to a king *de facto* than to a king *de jure*. He was on terms of intimacy with Cardinal Passionei, the gossiping Secretary of State; with powerful and ambitious statesmen like Cardinals Tencin and Aquaviva, the heads of the French and Spanish parties; with the witty and easy-going Archbishop of Bologna, Prosper Lambertini, who a few months later was elected as Clement's successor. His visit to Rome had taken place in the winter before the long-expected Conclave, and he left soon after the cardinals had assembled, so that he was well acquainted with the current gossip about the possible candidates, and could estimate their respective chances; while after his departure the letters which his friends wrote him kept him well informed of what was going on. It would indeed be hard to find a man who united so many qualifications as De Brosses possessed for presenting a lively and unprejudiced account of the proceedings of the Conclave.

In a letter to the Abbé de Quincey, written just before the death of Clement XII. in February 1740, he gives an interesting picture of the quaint ceremonial observed on these occasions:—

"I have just seen at the palace an instance of the vanity of human greatness. All the rooms were open and deserted, and I passed on without meeting even a cat till I reached the Pope's chamber. I found the body lying on the bed very much as usual. There were four Jesuits on guard, repeating, or pretending to repeat, their prayers. The Cardinal Camerlengo had been there about nine o'clock to perform his office. With a little mallet he struck three several times on the forehead of the deceased, calling him by name, *Lorenzo Corsini*, after each blow. Receiving no answer at the third summons, he took the ring of the Fisherman from the Pope's finger and broke it according to custom. When he left, every one else seems to have gone too. As the body has to remain on view for some time, the face has been shaved and a touch of rouge put on the cheeks to soften the ghastly pallor of death. . . . Every one's attention will now be directed to the arrangements for the funeral and the Conclave. During a vacancy the Camerlengo is in sole command. For several days he has the right of coining money in his own name and for his personal profit. He has just sent word to the Master of the Mint that if he does not contrive the issue of a certain very considerable sum within three days he will have him hung. The Master will take good care to comply: this terrible Camerlengo is a man of his word. They told me that on the day a Pope dies the mob always gets up a riot on the Piazza di Spagna. I expected to see a popular outbreak just under my windows, but in vain; nothing happened."

Of the arrangements of the Conclave and the formalities observed at its opening, De Brosses has much to say:—

"You know that the Conclave is built inside the Vatican; to put it more shortly, they build a town in a house and little houses in the big rooms, so you may guess it is the least commodious and the stuffiest town in the world. First of all, the masons set to work to brick up all the outer doors of the palace, the porticoes of the upper galleries, and all the windows, only two or three panes of glass being left in each, so that a sort of dim religious light prevails in the interior. The rooms are so spacious and lofty that little wooden two-storeyed cabins can be contrived inside them, and all along the outside runs an open corridor. . . . Each compartment contains a cell with the cardinal's bed, a tiny room alongside, and a bit of a lobby with a staircase leading to two small rooms for his servants. . . . Whether a cardinal attends the Conclave or not he has to pay for the building of his room. This costs at least five or six thousand francs, for God knows these workmen charge high enough when they get the chance. . . . There their Eminences are, packed like herrings in a tub, without ventilation or daylight, with candles burning at noon, poisoned by foul air and eaten up with bugs and fleas. A nice time they will have of it if they don't hurry up and finish their job before the hot weather comes: indeed, three or four generally die in each Conclave."

We have not space here to give De Brosse's account of the intricate system by which twice a day the cardinals record their votes, but in a letter written diary-fashion partly before and partly after the beginning of the Conclave, he forecasts the lines on which it seemed likely to be divided, adding some amusing thumb-nail sketches of the characters, aims, and chances of the various parties among the cardinals. The oldest members of the Sacred College—Ottoboni, nephew of Alexander VIII., and the two Altieri, nephews of Clement X.—he considered to be out of the question, not so much on account of their great age, which was rather likely to secure them the votes of those immediately junior to them, but because "*on ne reprend pas sitôt dans la même famille.*" Of the *créatures* of Clement XI., whose reign had lasted from 1700 to 1721, an almost unprecedentedly long period, there still remained a large number, and the real struggle would be between these and "*le nouveau collège*"—i.e. the cardinals of the dying Pope. At the head of the former was the Camerlengo mentioned above, Annibal Albani, Clement XI.'s nephew, who, as President of the Apostolic Chamber, had in his hands not only the government of Rome, but the arrangements of the Conclave. The latter was led by Corsini, nephew of Clement XII. The peculiarity of the situation was that neither of the leaders could hope to be himself elected, and perforce confined his efforts to securing either the election of one of his friends or at least the rejection of his enemies. De Brosse's portraits of them are amusing. Of Corsini he says:—

"He has little wit, less sense, and no capacity at all, but his position and the number of cardinals created by his uncle, make him sought after. . . . He has made a mess of the finances, as of everything else in his department: the people complain bitterly of the scarcity of money and the debasement of the currency. . . . To-day he is courted: in three months no one will go near him. The Princess Albani used to say that Popes' nephews die twice: the first time is when their uncles die; the second in the course of nature."

Albani found even less favour in his eyes, possibly because of his anti-French sympathies:—

"Greatly respected as he is for his ability, he is still more hated and feared. Treacherous, unprincipled, implacable even when he pretends to be reconciled, he has yet a perfect genius for intrigue, the best head in the College, and the worst reputation in Rome. His own party is not large, for the number of his uncle's *créatures* grows less daily, but he will put himself at the head of the Zelanti, or those who profess to be guided by the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and he will beat Corsini despite his larger forces. An army of deer with a lion to lead them is more dangerous than an army of lions with a deer at their head. He manages the whole Conclave by his superior genius, by the importance of his office, and by his haughty, overbearing attitude."

Corsini's following, however, was very strong. His uncle's cardinals alone numbered thirty-two, or very nearly the two-thirds of the College necessary to secure the success of any candidate they might agree upon. He was understood, moreover, to have the support of the French and Spanish parties, under the leadership of Tencin and Aquaviva, and this seemed sufficient to give him the making of the Pope. Cardinal Tencin indeed was, as De Broses said, the real if not the nominal leader of the party:—

"The connection between the two branches of the House of Bourbon, with the ascendancy which the elder has established over the younger, and which it is natural to suppose Tencin's superior mind gives him over Aquaviva, causes Spain to be regarded here as the auxiliary of France. Take into consideration the prestige of France in Italy since the last war, and the European reputation of Cardinal Fleury, whose confidant Tencin is supposed to be, and the conclusion is that Tencin dominates alike Corsini's timidity and Aquaviva's not over-subtle mind. It is therefore common talk that the decision will rest with him. As we walked with him in the procession [to the Vatican], we had the gratification of hearing the spectators gossiping to this effect. I saw more than one point him out with the remark, 'There goes the man who'll make the Pope.' Who it is this party have in view is just what I don't know—and shall not till after the event."

Yet the Camerlengo was a formidable adversary. De Broses adds later:—

"I doubt if after all Corsini can count on all his uncle's cardinals. Albani seems to be gaining over the older men and the Zelanti. As he is the enemy of France he has the support of the friends of Austria. He has detached some of the Corsini faction. . . . The Zelanti will throw their weight on one side or the other, according to their own opinions of the candidate."

A few days after the Conclave began, De Broses and his companions, finding Rome "deadly dull without any Pope or cardinals or operas or parties, set out for Modena, but his friends in the Papal city kept him posted up in all the news, and he was able to give the Abbé the sequel of the story. For the first few days, he says, every one paid every one else the compliment of voting for him out of politeness: the cardinals were in fact just keeping their hands in till the real game began. The first candidate who came seriously to the front was Aldrovandi, a native of Bologna, whom De Broses had already described in his former letter as *papabile*, or what a racing man would call "in the running." So early an appearance the President considered to be a tactical mistake, for a candidature which is seriously intended is hardly ever mentioned at first. Aldrovandi therefore soon dropped into the background for a time, and after three or four more

names had come into temporary prominence, Cardinal Porzia, a Venetian of good birth, high character, and great capacity, was put forward by the Corsini party. He seemed on the verge of success, for the Zelanti saw in him the man who would follow in the steps of Sixtus V. and restore order in the Papal States. The Camerlengo, however, was afraid of him for this very reason, and resolved on his exclusion by fair means or foul. The former failing, recourse was had to the latter. The President writes a little later :—

“It is all over with poor Porzia; the play has ended in a tragedy for him. His party was so strong that with a little exertion and one final effort he would have found himself on the throne. Just at the critical moment there was circulated in the Conclave a lampoon full of scandalous imputations on his honour and scurrilous threats against his person. This infamous proceeding shocked all right-thinking men. Porzia of course demanded satisfaction with the energy and boldness that are natural to him, but did not succeed in getting it. It proved impossible to discover the authors of the libel. The Camerlengo, who is not unreasonably suspected of having a hand in the matter, has been very slack in this respect. Whatever was the source of this dirty trick, it attained its object. Some of Porzia’s friends cooled off, saying that it was impossible to raise a man to the throne when he had just been publicly insulted; the Zelanti considered that he had betrayed too much rage and ambition on this occasion; and so at the next scrutiny he saw his hopes vanish into smoke. The disappointment and the affront together drove him nearly frantic. He retired into his cell, where in three days he died of ‘Pope’s fever’ (*rabbia papale*).”

Aldrovandi next reappeared on the scenes, but he too, as a *créature* of the late Pope, as a Frenchman, and as an hereditary enemy of the Albani, was not to the Camerlengo’s taste. The old intrigue began again with a new object, and a quarrel was fomented between Tencin and Aquaviva. This, however, did not seem to affect Aldrovandi’s chances. The Zelanti were “solid” for him. He had thirty-one or thirty-two votes now at each scrutiny, and (several of the cardinals having died, or left the Conclave through illness) only thirty-four were necessary to secure his election. Nevertheless, Albani persisted in his opposition. He even sought an interview with Corsini, and offered to elect a Pope from among the creation of Clement XII., as long as it was not Aldrovandi. Corsini refused. De Brosse describes the Camerlengo’s next stratagem :—

“I will give you the wind-up of Aldrovandi’s story. His prospects continued excellent. . . . They tell me that when Passionei,¹ as scrutator of the day, had to open the thirty-third ticket in his favour, he turned as white as a sheet for fear of finding a thirty-fourth among those remaining in the urn. However, he was let off with the fright :

¹ One of the leaders of the opposite party.

there were no more at the second ballot. Matters remained in this position a long time; . . . indeed the Conclave has been sitting more than five months. . . . At last Albani, fearing that the weariness, the discomfort, the hot weather, the danger of an epidemic and other motives, might in the end determine one of his party to change sides, resolved to play his last card and rid himself of Aldrovandi at all risks. He got hold of a certain Franciscan monk named Ravali, not too strait-laced, but a great gun in the Order. Ravali paid a visit to Cardinal Aldrovandi at the Rota [the little window which forms the sole means of communication with the outside world], and complimented him on his approaching election, which was understood in Rome to be assured. The cardinal replied that it was true the majority had done him the honour of thinking of him, but he did not see any certainty in the matter. There was little likelihood indeed that the goodwill displayed towards him would take effect, for some persons who were prejudiced against him were opposing him with all their might."

After a little more conversation, Aldrovandi said plainly that it was the Camerlengo whose influence prevented his election. The Franciscan made excuses for Albani. He had no personal feeling against Aldrovandi, but there was a long-standing quarrel between the families, and he was afraid that Aldrovandi if elected Pope would pay off old scores. The cardinal at once replied that he had long ago forgotten the quarrel: he had a great respect for the Camerlengo, and was not the man to be ungrateful to those who had helped him. The monk answered that in that case it would be the easiest matter in the world to bring them together. Would Aldrovandi allow him to let Albani know how matters stood? The cardinal fell into the trap. De Brosses goes on:—

"Aldrovandi, who saw only this one obstacle to his election, and would have given the world to get rid of such a thorn in the flesh, consented with the utmost alacrity. The conversation then turned to indifferent topics, and presently the monk took his leave. Just as he was going he said, as if struck with a sudden thought, 'Monsignore, the word of an insignificant monk is but poor security between persons of your rank. I shall have to show the Camerlengo something worthier of credit. Will you allow me to write you a letter on the subject as of my own motion? In your reply you will have the opportunity of repeating what you have just now said about Cardinal Albani, and if he doubts my assurances of your esteem, I shall be prepared with the means of convincing him.' This was agreed to, and the letters were written. They tell me too that Aldrovandi's reply was pretty strong on the subject of *gratitude*!

"As soon as Albani had secured this reply he hastened round to the Zelanti. 'Look at your Aldrovandi!' he said. 'You are never tired of praising him as a saint who is incapable of intriguing to become God's

Vicar. And yet here he is employing underhand practices and setting to work to ingratiate himself with me and canvass my vote !' As soon as Ruffo, Petra, and the rest of the Zelanti had read the letter they cried out, 'There is no doubt about it, Aldrovandi is canvassing. The Holy Ghost will have none of this sort. We must not dream of him any more !' The poor man's hopes dwindled at each day's scrutiny. He saw that he had cut his own throat by his gullibility, and was the first to beg his friends not to think of him any longer as a possible candidate. He is even said to have suggested that they should transfer their support to Lambertini, who also is a Bolognese and some sort of connection of Aldrovandi's."

The matter was becoming a scandal, and it was plain that the deadlock could not be allowed to continue indefinitely :—

"Aquaviva has had another confabulation with the Camerlengo. He reminded him that the Conclave had already lasted nearly six months. . . . Albani wanted to insist on the election of Cardinal Mosca. 'It is no use talking of Mosca,' said Aquaviva. 'We will not allow you to choose the Pope, but we are perfectly willing to make a choice that will satisfy you. You don't like Aldrovandi: well and good, we will think no more of him. You won't have any of our cardinals, and we won't have any of yours: the only thing to be done is to elect one of the neutrals, that is, of the *créatures* of Benedict XIII. Of these only Lambertini and Lercari seem *papabili*. Which of the two do you prefer? Lambertini was born in the Papal States, and the people of Rome make a great point of this.' 'Lambertini? Very well, with all my heart !' said Albani, who would sooner have had a Turk than Aldrovandi."

Accordingly, next morning Prosper Lambertini was unanimously elected, though the night before he had not had a single vote. De Brosses was in high delight. He had met Lambertini during his stay at Bologna the year before, and had been charmed with his gaiety, his wit, and his literary attainments. On the day of Clement's funeral he had attended a banquet given by some wild young English friends of his in Rome. The proceedings ended in an indecorous parody of the Conclave got up by "Sir Ashwood" and "Milord Stafford," who were the ringleaders. The guests all voted for their favourite candidates, and De Brosses writes, "I gave my vote to Cardinal Lambertini, who is, I really believe, the best of all the Sacred College. At any rate I like him the best, because he is well-bred and a good fellow—which none of his colleagues are." The acquaintance was renewed at Ancona, when Lambertini was on his way to Rome to take part in the Conclave. De Brosses told him of the mock ceremony in which he had been taking part, and remarked that the vote he had given ought to be worth a cardinal's hat to him if Lambertini became Pope. The cardinal enjoyed

the joke, but said he was afraid that neither he nor De Broses would be old enough for such exalted offices.

The election indeed, though arrived at in such a questionable fashion, proved a very good one. There are few among the 260 odd Popes on the list who have left a better reputation for good manners, good morals, and good sense than Benedict XIV., which was the title taken by Lambertini in memory of the Pope who had raised him to the cardinalate. Horace Walpole's famous epigram on this "Priest without insolence, Prince without favourites, Pope without nepotism, Author without vanity, beloved by Papists and esteemed by Protestants," shows in what light he appeared to an Englishman who certainly could not be accused of any undue weakness for the Papacy. And his election will furnish devout Catholics with yet another illustration of the truth of Hamlet's words :

"Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall : and that should teach us,
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

W. K. STRIDE.

BECAUSE OF THE WEATHER

A STUDY IN TEMPERS AND TEMPERATURE

I

OF course you think I'm a discontented idiot," Gerald Orkney concluded plaintively, with a very imperfect note of interrogation in his voice as we halted on the Embankment. Instinctively, rather than of set purpose, we had stayed our steps at one of our favourite points of view, nearly opposite the gardens of the Temple. Already more than once our walk had suffered interruption, for it was very hot in the glow of the veiled London sun; there was no life in the air, and even the water seemed to labour under the same burden of listlessness that oppressed us.

I tapped the parapet a little impatiently with the crooked handle of my walking-stick.

"I should put it stronger than that," I murmured sympathetically. "Much stronger, you—infernal young ass! I may—feel for you, but as for understanding, I don't, I haven't a glimmering!"

Gerald leaned his head on his hands and gazed for a moment at his reflection in the river, a vague, blurred image presenting itself fitfully amid the miscellaneous flotsam of sticks, and corks, and straws, that the turning tide had swept together at the foot of the stone stairway.

"She's pretty," he remarked absently, after a pause of a few minutes' duration.

I acquiesced without reserve, and neither of us imagined that the other was speaking of the brown-sailed barge which was dropping slowly past us with a lazy tide.

"And—" his voice was tinged with a fine, youthful contempt, "it's no use shirking the fact, she has—in short, she's rich!"

I could not but feel that this discussion of the many advantages possessed by Miss Margery Paget was not characterised by any extreme of delicacy; but a certain brutal frankness, which is not without its charm, has always obtained in my relations with young Orkney, and, after all, he is engaged to her—a fact to which I am gradually accustoming myself—and she is my cousin, and I have known her ever since the days of her first governess. In short, I acquiesced again, without demur.

"And—she's an angel."

"Of course!"

Gerald was silent for a moment, leaning against the parapet, and

swinging his gloves over the water in a way which struck me as incautious. Suddenly he faced round and confronted me.

"We seem to be agreed, anyhow," he declared mockingly. "I am, in plain words, a damned fool, and I am engaged to be married to the—to the prettiest angel in Kensington. Not to dwell on her—other attributes!"

My friends have a way of coming to me for sympathy, and I seldom withhold it; advice is another matter, not to be provided so cheaply—a dangerous commodity, in which one ought not to be allowed to deal without examination and diploma.

"That's about the size of it," I allowed cheerfully. "You are a barrister; that means nothing: so am I. You are young; I envy you that; but, after all, it's not an extraordinary attribute. You are—well, decently good looking; you are capable of being passably amiable, if you are put to it; and you have an income just large enough to allow you to publish volumes of inferior verse at your own expense. And—you have had the incredible impudence to pay your addresses to my cousin—to Margery; and the little donkey has not only not rejected them, but has overcome the scruples of her infatuated parents. And now—what the devil do you mean by it!—why aren't you satisfied? Why aren't you sporting a perennial smile?"

Orkney shrugged his shoulders, impatiently interrupting me.

"O Lord—I know all that! And—hang it all, Singleton, didn't you introduce me to her?"

"I have—incautiously—introduced you to most of my friends," I admitted. "I always thought that, for a poet, you were fairly presentable. You know, after all, you don't look like a poet. Come to think of it, they hardly ever do."

Darkness seemed to be setting in, though it was barely half-past five on a September afternoon: the air grew momentarily more heavy, and stale, and languid, and the sky lost itself in a dull, greyish-purple haze, under which the river weltered with an almost stagnant smoothness. We both made the weather the subject of doleful protests, and then, turning our backs on the river, of which the opposite shore seemed to have receded into a mist of impalpable dimness, we toiled across the wide roadway, making for the passage at the side of Essex Street.

Orkney fingered the strap of his umbrella doubtfully, glancing critically at the heavy vault of sky, from which a few big drops had fallen, starring the hot pavement with sudden blotches.

"After all, it's rather serious, you know!" he suggested after an interval of silence.

"Don't—give yourself airs!" I put in quickly. "Do you suppose it amuses me . . .? Has it occurred to you, that you are placing me in a devilish awkward position? It seems to me, I ought to be asking you for an explanation, instead of being nice to you."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Andrew! Look here, you're ten years older than I am. . . ."

"Seven, and I have a Family Bible to prove it."

"—Years older than I am, and I suppose you've had some experience of this kind of thing?"

"Never upon my soul," I declared; "I have never bored my friends to the verge of extinction with the expression of my yearnings for the unattainable, and then done my best to finish them off with regrets. . . ."

"You think that—that now I am crying because I have *got* the moon," my friend interposed.

I looked at him sharply; we were laboriously climbing the dusty stone staircase that led to his chambers in Plowden Buildings: in the dusk his face was inscrutable.

"I'll be shot if I know what you're crying about!" I protested, with a touch of impatience, while he fumbled with the latch of his door. "Anyhow, are you—do you—in short, are you in love with her?"

He threw the door open, and waited for me to pass before him into the room. I shook my head, and he pulled out his watch, and gazed at it with an expression of blank gravity.

I began to murmur something about going home to dress for dinner; remembering, with a notable absence of enthusiasm, that I was engaged to dine with the Pagets—with Margery's people, in Kensington Square.

"How do I know? Have you ever been in love? Oh, don't you understand at all—the charm and the despair, the passionate pursuit, and then the sudden sense of having arrived at the beginning of the long, straight path."

He spoke fast and incoherently, the accent of doubt in every word, and his fingers clinched and unclined themselves nervously. He paused suddenly, pulling himself up with an impatient sigh, and was silent for a moment, watching me furtively with troubled eyes.

"She's an angel," he said absently, "and I'm jealous of everything she touches. Oh, how do I know?"

I tucked my stick under my arm, and thrust my hands into the pockets of my trousers; the staircase was stuffy, pervaded with a smell of cooking; my head ached with the dull pain that tells of thunder in the air, and it occurred to me that it would be possible to continue under more favourable conditions the discussion upon which we had embarked. I felt that I could be far more sympathetic in an armchair, after dinner.

"You're an incomprehensible idiot!" I declared testily; "and—and you're behaving pretty badly, you know."

He interrupted me with a pathetic little moan, and I felt that my conduct was brutal. After all, as he suggested incoherently, what was the good of telling him what he knew very well already?

"Oh, well, it will be all right," I concluded weakly. "Don't worry yourself. This comes of staying in town all the summer: you want change of air—rest and change of air. By-the-bye, it's the first night of that new piece at the Burlington, you know."

Gerald turned on his heel with a hardly pardonable abruptness and began to busy himself with candles and matches.

"Were you going to say something?" I asked.

He came forward and looked at me with a scowl, rather as if he was making up his mind where to hit me; then he glanced down, and eyed his dusty boots disconsolately.

"Thanks so much," he said vaguely. "I mean, I hope I haven't bored you. You know—you don't know."

"Of course, don't mention it," I put in suavely. "About the theatre—I was only going to say they've sent me a box, and I thought of taking Margery and her people. It will be frightfully hot, of course, but the storm may break first."

"Eh? what? I say, do you think—you don't mean? I should be awfully obliged."

"Box only holds four," I continued regretfully. "But the old people may not stay to the end; political 'At home' of sorts; Margery won't go—they will."

"I'm awfully obliged," he declared excitedly, following me downstairs with a candlestick in each hand. "The Burlington? Where? How shall I know? I can get in somehow, I suppose? I say, if you should want to go to that 'At Home,' you know . . .! Going to rain? Yes, jolly night! Lend you an umbrella? Oh, of course; wait a minute!"

Gerald rushed upstairs, taking three steps at a stride. He returned a few seconds later with his second-best umbrella and without the candles, and his descent was as deliberate as his ascent had been precipitate.

"On consideration," he said gloomily, "I don't know. Perhaps I won't. And yet——!"

"Oh, thanks! Good-night!" I cried, clutching the umbrella and turning on my heel.

I was glad to find myself alone. Gerald's words had somewhat disconcerted me, shaking my belief in the comfortable security in which I had been at such pains to teach myself to place reliance; had come within an ace of making me think seriously about . . .? Well, about myself!

II

HALF-an-hour later, when I was withdrawing the latch-key from my door in Maida Vale, I became aware that my butler was awaiting me in the passage, with a small circular tray balanced delicately in one hand, and a square white envelope neatly disposed in the centre of it. I am in the habit of referring to Mr. Weaver as my butler, but let me hasten to disclaim the ownership of so pretentious a piece of furniture. It would be more correctly said that Mr. Weaver owns me; and it is impossible to deny that to be kept by a butler who has been sensible enough to marry a cook is a privilege worth paying for, however unlovely one's lodging and musical one's neighbours.

The note was from Margery ; I was sure of that, as soon as I recognised in Mr. Weaver's face a certain austerity, a primness of lip, that sometimes tempers his habitually indulgent smile. Since his retirement into private life he has permitted his countenance to become, at times, unprofessionally expressive, and I am convinced that he regards with extreme disfavour Margery's not infrequent epistolary invasions of my monastic seclusion.

I dressed quickly ; Margery had written to ask me to come early, as she particularly wanted to talk to me before dinner, and was armed from head to foot some minutes before my butler's performance on a shrill whistle enticed a hansom to the door ; minutes during which I had time to throw several wistful glances at my favourite arm-chair, and the dilapidated volume of Stendhal that was lying open, face downwards, in close fellowship with a briar pipe, on a little table at its side.

I was still lost in a profitless speculation as to whether those quiet evenings, from the enjoyment of which one is always so improvidently ready to debar one's self, would ever prove half so delightful as one's regrets are wont to picture them, when Margery rustled into the drawing-room of the old house in Kensington Square, and kissed me in a manner which I could not help regarding as precipitate. For some vicissitudes, one likes to be prepared.

"After all," I murmured, "even Stendhal might have palled after a time."

Margery made a face at me, and perched herself lightly on the arm of the sofa upon which I had deposited myself, near an open window. Margery is small ;—really, Gerald ought to have been gifted with a better sense of proportion ;—and she has eyes which are grey or blue according to circumstances ; and amber-coloured hair, which is always on the verge of being untidy, without quite arriving at it ; and, well, a figure, and a complexion, and a way of looking remarkably demure, or intensely wicked, at a moment's notice ; and, altogether, Margery is rather nice.

"Bother Stendhal," I said mildly, stretching out my feet, and wondering whether Margery would mind if I asked her to fan me. "And I have sat on less comfortable sofas."

Margery had been swinging one foot impatiently ; she sighed now, and looked at me, and then out of the open window into the dusky garden.

"I want to talk to you," she said, "and papa has come in already, and he has such a faculty for dressing quickly ! You see—the fact is—oh, why is it so hot, and still, and—dreadful ?"

"I'm listening," I suggested meekly, thinking it hardly likely that she was waiting for an answer to her question.

"Oh—if you will interrupt !" She got up and walked to the fireplace, and stood there knitting her brows at me.

"Poor little beggar," I said softly.

"Andrew !"

"Gerald, I mean."

"Five feet eleven and a half, and nearly thirteen stone, isn't little," she declared with some severity. "And, anyhow——"

I smiled encouragingly. "I was thinking of—ever so long ago, at Winchester. He used to be little!"

Margery sighed. "One used to be—oh, all sorts of things."

"And—isn't one?" I inquired suggestively.

Margery sighed again. "For instance, you used to be quite nice, and sympathetic."

"So I am—quite nice. And, anyhow, you can't expect—and haven't I wished you joy in the most magnanimous way? I'm so glad we're going to talk about me!"

"Oh, joy!" She turned her back on me, and began to disarrange some sweet peas and frail Shirley poppies that were standing in a vase upon the mantel-shelf.

"And I—! Andrew, is the world like that—is life always unsatisfactory, and disappointing, and horrid when one is grown up?"

"Little goose," I said nervously. "Really—you too!"

"What do you mean?" she put in, swiftly facing round and confronting me.

I waved my hands deprecatingly.

"Oh, nothing! You know, it's a beast of a world. One never gets what one wants, but one often gets something so much like it that for the time being one can't tell the difference. But I—I thought that kind of frame of mind only occurred in—foolish old bachelors like myself."

"Oh," she said meditatively, "you're quite, quite sure?"

"Quite!" I replied with heroic mendacity. "Was that thunder?" She dropped her hands with a tragic little gesture.

"I thought I knew—that we both knew so well! And this afternoon, we were quite horrid to each other. At least I was. Have you seen Gerald?"

"Have I seen? Oh, I believe so. Of course, at the Club, and I walked back to the Temple with him. Frightfully hot, and——"

"Did he—talk to you?"

I laughed uneasily. "It seemed the natural thing to do!"

"Please don't! Did he—say anything particular? Did he seem—I mean——"

"Oh," I said, with discreet deprecation, "he seemed—ah, by the way, he rather thought of joining us at the Burlington this evening!"

Margery gave a little gasp, and then frowned. At this juncture the door opened and my uncle interrupted us. When he had shaken hands with me, and thrown a ponderous stone at the Clerk of the weather, Margery linked her arm in his, and led him back to the door.

"Dinner in ten minutes, papa dear," she murmured sweetly. "*Pall Mall Gazette* in your study. Andrew and I are talking—we simply can't be interrupted."

After she had closed the door on her docile parent, Margery paced slowly down the room until she was close to the window by which I was sitting.

"I want—never to see him again—never, never!"

I looked at her in bewildered wonder, a pathetic little figure, with plaintive eyes, and lips that gave the lie to the firmness of her words.

"You—you haven't quarrelled?" I queried vaguely, with a curious thrill at my heart, a sensation that almost mastered the regret which I told myself that I felt for my deserted fastness in Maida Vale.

"Oh, quarrelled!" she cried, with an entirely mirthless laugh. "Isn't that what lovers do, in old-fashioned novels, just before they're going to be particularly ridiculous? Can't you understand, Andrew, without wanting everything in black and white? It's just simply a mistake. We don't—we aren't—oh, I don't deserve——!"

I felt that tears were imminent, and I hoped never more sincerely that dinner would be served with rigid punctuality.

"My dear child!" I protested lightly, "you've been doing too much—you're overwrought: London doesn't suit you after Scotland. And, anyhow, it isn't too late. But . . ."

She drew in her breath sharply.

"You mean—one could give up—break it off?"

I nodded, avoiding her questioning eyes.

"One could," I said. "But—it will all come straight, little woman. Forget, for a little. Lord, what a flash! Did you see how it lit up the big pear-tree?"

She bent her gaze mechanically out of the window. The sky was writhing and blinking under the stress of the still distant storm: flash succeeded flash, and a dull rumble of thunder rolled almost unceasingly.

"He cares so much," she said softly. "It would—kill him—though—ah, how do I know—now?"

"H'm," I put in quickly, as I rose to greet my aunt. "You know—men take a lot of killing."

III

TO realise that one has eaten oysters, for the first time since April, only when one sees their empty shells gazing blankly upwards from one's plate is, I suppose, a sign of preoccupation, a frame of mind that I deplore, and which, I hold, is nowhere more out of place than at a well-appointed dinner-table. However, if I was preoccupied, it is certain that I enjoyed no monopoly of that mental state, and it was on the shoulders, eminently capable, of my uncle that the burden of conversation chiefly fell. He prattled of politics and persons with serene garrulity until coffee was served, interrupted occasionally by my aunt's unflinching protests against the vagaries of the lightning, which still at intervals shot fitful gleams athwart the open window. For once I did not regret that respect for the exigencies of the drama forbade us to

linger over our cigarettes. In the hall, while the old people were leisurely donning their wraps, Margery and I found ourselves for an instant apart, and she took occasion to address a murmured appeal to me as I dropped the cloak delicately upon her expectant shoulders.

"Can't you help me, Andrew—advise me!"

My hand trembled, lingered for a moment on her shoulder, of which the subtle warmth just penetrated the silken wrap. Margery shivered slightly, and turned her strangely grave face to me.

"Don't worry, dear," I said gently, stifling a quick desire, to which such treatment was no stranger. "Surely there's no hurry. These things have a way of coming right by themselves."

"No hurry!" she echoed impatiently. "Don't you realise what I'm asking—that it's our happiness or misery that is at stake—almost life or death? How can I bear this—this uncertainty? Oh, it's easy to see that you have never——!"

"Oh, of course," I put in quickly, a tumult of revolt uprising in my heart, a sudden longing, of which I was acutely conscious while still striving to disregard its meaning.

"I wish I could help you," I protested, as her eyes encountered mine again. "But I don't see—what can you do, but leave things as they are, or——"

"Or?"

"Break it off!" I murmured woodenly, with a curious tension at my throat. "Break it off—begin again!"

My aunt drew near, her husband following in her wake. The street door was opened, and we packed ourselves into the portly old-fashioned brougham, where further intimate conversation became impossible.

I watched Margery askance as we drove rapidly eastward, her pale face showing like the moon in a cloudy sky, as the lamplight fell upon it. Once, when the horses plunged, as a flash of lightning more than ordinarily vivid stabbed the sleeping park with instant light, Margery's hand dropped on mine, and rested there a second, until the answering crash of thunder broke and rolled away. A sudden gust, that made the lamps flicker, and sent the dust spinning across the road, warned us to close the windows, and almost before this could be accomplished the whole world seemed blotted and lost in silvery streams of rain, that drummed and drilled upon the curved roof of the carriage, and splashed in multitudinous fountains from the gleaming pavement. As we drove through Piccadilly the lamps loomed large and liquid, and bright shop-fronts sent broad rays swimming across the street. The dull weight that had oppressed us seemed to melt away, and we rejoiced in the rain, as beleaguered citizens welcome a relieving army.

Margery leaned forward, with a sudden brilliance in her eyes, wondering at the strange crop of umbrellas that had sprung up, as if by magic, transforming the side-walks with the effect of some fantastic ballet; with a laughing word of pity for the groups that huddled forlornly in the doorways. My uncle heaved a comfortable sigh, declaring that he

felt ten years younger; my aunt sat up, and furled an ineffectual fan, the steady motions of which had been slowly mesmerising me, while her face resumed its wonted expression of an almost exasperating placidity. We passed into the theatre through a bedraggled crowd that had gathered under the shelter of the portico: the air felt fresh and grateful, inspired with a clean, delicate fragrance, as of distant fields and forests, and I was sorry to pass from it into the weary heat and brilliance of the vestibule.

Margery took my arm as we made our way along the crowded corridor; she looked up at me once rather timidly, with a question in her eyes.

"After all," she murmured enigmatically, while we waited for her parents at the door of our box, "I never said that I was sure!"

"No—of course!" I ejaculated, as an attendant thrust some programmes into my hand.

"And one says—oh, what doesn't one say!" Margery whispered, giving me her cloak to hang up in a corner of the box. "How nice, we're just in time to see the curtain go up! Now, tell me who everybody is, show me all the critics: you can invent, when you don't know: so long as they're bald and important, or hairy and impossible, I shall be ready to believe anything!"

But the curtain rose before my powers of invention had been granted an opportunity to display themselves, and Margery and I relapsed into a silence, which, if it did not necessarily imply a keen interest in the dramatic fare that was set before us, was at least not incapable of being interpreted as such.

After a while I abandoned my vain attempts to recall my vagabond attention from its wanderings. The passing of the thunderstorm had replaced my feeling of oppression and futility with an almost painful sense of nervous alertness. To sit still was a martyrdom; to keep one's thoughts from leaping wildly over their accustomed barriers, a sheer impossibility. My anticipations glanced timidly forward to the difficult moments which might be in store, when Margery and I would be left together after the second act; forecasting rapidly what she might say, what I might dare. I told myself that I hoped that Orkney would be there, or, at least, that he would be waiting for us when we left the theatre; but none the less, I was afraid to let my eyes wander over the crowded house for fear that they might detect him, gazing askance at us out of the twilight of the stalls, the mysterious limbo of the pit. When the curtain fell, at last, upon the close of the first act, and the light and animation which had seemed concentrated on the stage diffused itself throughout the waking auditorium, I could hardly deliver myself of a conventional answer to the trivial remark with which Margery turned to me. Her face was rather pale, I thought, and her eyes avoided mine with an unwonted shyness. She leaned forward a little presently, so that I could not see her face, and gazed down into the stalls, while I found myself discussing, almost

automatically, the merits of the performance with my aunt. When the door of our box was opened, by an attendant bearing coffee and ices, I looked to see Margery turn round quickly, as I had done, and I half hoped, yet feared, to read the expression which should gleam for a moment in her face. My expectation, however, was not realised; if the opening of the door drew my eyes swiftly to it, brought a quick thrill to my heart, Margery was better schooled, and she did not even turn her head.

The long ten minutes dragged to an end: the stalls, more than decimated by the flight of their occupants to the cooler corridors and refreshment bars, filled quickly as the shrill tinkle of the call bells pierced the murmur of voices; and once more we found ourselves hanging on the outskirts of the playwright's fictive world. If the first act had seemed to trench upon eternity, the second, as I racked my mind, seeking vainly for some stronghold of firm purpose, flew for me on swallows' wings. My uncle had grown impatient, as the hour for his engagement drew near, fingering his watch and exchanging whispers with my aunt; and almost before the salvo of applause had died away, I had closed the narrow door upon the old people and found myself alone with Margery. She had risen to help her mother with her wraps, and now took possession of the chair which I had vacated, near the back of the box.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed with plaintive petulance, as I picked up the programme which she had dropped. "How strange, and impossible, everything seems! After all, is anything real—anything at all?"

"Nothing much," I declared with an attempt at ease. "But,—for impossible! It's only when things are real that they become impossible. If one could only be quite sure——"

"Ah!" she sighed.

"That nothing is real, I mean."

She glanced at me over her slowly-swaying fan, lifting her eyebrows interrogatively.

"Then—then everything would be possible."

"I don't see," she said slowly. "What would there be left to believe?"

"One needn't," I hazarded, "one could make-believe: isn't that just as good, if—? One could pretend. . . ."

"Pretend?" she murmured, as I paused.

"That there was no one else, no one in the world, but just our two selves."

"And—Gerald . . ." she put in quickly, and then blushed, furling her fan sharply.

I caught my breath, silenced on the instant, with a curious feeling that I was stranded, driven hard aground in mid-channel, while I watched the reckless current that had borne me speeding swiftly by. I fixed my eyes intently on Margery: she was breathing fast; a sudden

access of colour had flown to her cheeks, and her face wore an expression in which bewilderment betrayed itself most eloquently.

Even as I gazed there was a sound of footsteps in the corridor, of fingers fumbling at the lock: the door opened, and in a moment Gerald was greeting us with a beaming face and breathless explanations.

"Couldn't get in before for love or money. At last met a man coming out—chap who does the theatres for the *Outcry*. Fell on his neck, and got him to square the box office, and pass me in; then met your people—found their carriage for them,—they told me the number of the box, and . . . and here I am!"

"We—we thought you were never coming," I protested awkwardly.

"Yes," said Margery, with a little air of reflection, "we had almost given you up."

During the course of the last act I had plenty of time to realise that my lines were not cast in pleasant places. I hurried away, almost before the curtain fell, on the pretext of securing a cab; this quest proved no sinecure, and before we exchanged farewells—I excusing myself on the score of a train to be caught at an early hour in the morning—Gerald and Margery had been relieved of the burden of my presence for fully twenty minutes.

"Good night, old chap," said Orkney, as he stepped into the hansom. "And, I say—about this afternoon—of course, I know you meant well, but, oh, well, one's like that sometimes. Good-night!"

"H'm," I remarked to myself rather drearily as I watched them drive away. "The—the sort of thing lovers do—just when they're going to be particularly ridiculous!"

ARTHUR MOORE.

LETTERS FROM THE NORTH

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE," ETC., ETC.

CARE AMICE,—The complete change we awakened to that morning at Förde was, I have said, as though magic had been at work. Yesterday had been hopelessly wet and gloomy, for if half the time it did not rain, the clouds until evening never left the mountains. This morning there was no vestige of cloud, mist, or rain left; the sun was already warm and brilliant. No wonder L. was enthusiastic, and we both felt a strange exhilaration.

"How about your pessimistic views of yesterday?" he asked. "And what about my second-sight? I begin to think it would be worth while advertising myself as a prophet," he laughed. "I wonder if I have the gift of crystal-seeing? It would be interesting. I believe that sort of thing may be cultivated—by some people. This is glorious," projecting his head and half his body from the window. "The atmosphere is perfectly radiant; mountains and skies seem melting into each other. I am all impatience to be off."

Then we went round and found the gentle landlady posting up her books.

"You are fortunate, sirs," she said. "The weather has changed, and I think sunshine has come to stay. Yesterday was deplorable. You had courage to brave it."

"Madame, one must have courage in Norway," returned L. "And travelling in a land without daily communications, one often has to brave wet skies. You appear to have a charming country around you."

"Ah, sir, you cannot conceive the beauty of the Söndfjord," returned Madame. "I know much of Norway; I know nothing more lovely. It seems to me that the most superb walk in the world is from here to the waterfall you passed on your way down. If you could remain a few days and explore in such weather as this, you would be enchanted."

"I quite believe it," returned L. "But I can't say that we felt particularly happy at the previous station of Langeland. We were indeed glad to get away from it. What is the terrible atmosphere about the place?"

"Ah, sir, do not ask me," returned Madame, shivering and turning pale.

"Then there *is* a mystery! I was sure of it. What is it all about?"

Madame raised her hands and turned yet paler.

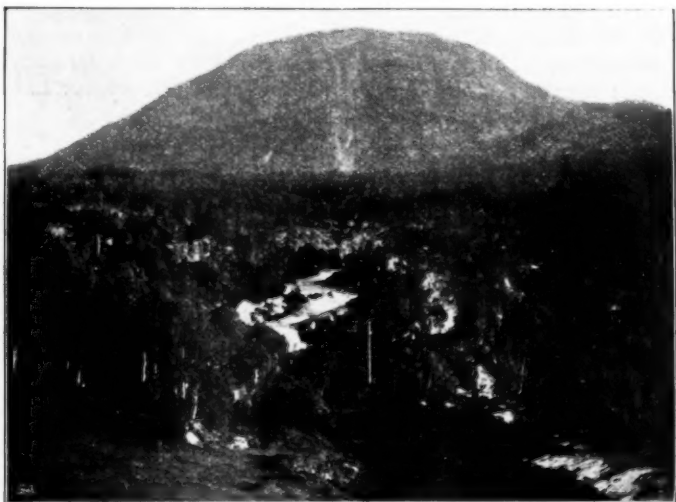
"Is it murder?" asked L. in solemn whisper.

Madame shuddered; not a word spoke she. But what, on occasion, can be more awful, more eloquent than silence?

"I don't believe they are human beings," said L. "That fearful and frightful old woman—she is supernatural; a vampire existing on human blood. Have you seen the old witch?"

Madame shivered visibly, her hand over her eyes as though to shut out some terrible picture.

"I have never seen her," she murmured; "only heard about her. No, I don't much think she is a witch, though it is said she deals in



FÖRDE.

magic. One doesn't know what to credit. It is of little use putting faith in stories, or speaking after other people; you must see things for yourself, then you may be convinced. What you see you must believe, but very little of what you hear. But we were talking of the beauty of the country—a more agreeable subject, with your permission, wholesome and open, with no mystery about it. This broad valley alone is a picture, and if you saw our fruits and flowers at their best, you would envy us. It is one of the gardens of Norway. Then we have so many other valleys. The Angedal, with its splendid mountains, the Sandfjeld and Kupefjelde, nearly 5000 feet high, and magnificent in form. There is the lovely Jölster River—all which you will presently pass on your way to Nedre Vasenden. Ah, sirs, if you have souls above fish-

ing, I counsel you to come and spend a week or two in this neighbourhood. You will never regret it."

"Do the fishermen explore the country?"

"Explore the country?" echoed Madame, opening her eyes very wide. "Pay attention to mountains and valleys, and all the beauties of the world? Dear good men! if you placed them in paradise, and there was no river to fish, they would be utterly miserable. On the other hand, banish them to the lower regions, and if they found good trout-fishing there, they would ask nothing better than to remain. Fishing is a mania, sirs, and those who are attacked by it think of nothing else, talk of nothing else, sit down to eat and drink for the



ON THE WAY TO NEDRE VASENDEN.

sake of getting up again to fish, and I have not the least doubt, dream of nothing but fishing, wading, and throwing the fly, as they call it."

"At least it is an innocent and harmless way of passing a holiday," said L. "I like to see people in earnest and enthusiastic even in play. It argues well for their more serious occupations."

"Je ne dis pas," returned Madame, who seemed to know a little of many languages, and spoke French with quite a proper accent. "Je ne dis pas. I am very glad they come here, and very thankful for their patronage. I wish more would come. I would do all I could to make them comfortable and give them of my best. They should all be welcome; all share and share alike; no favouring one and slighting another; an innkeeper must have no prejudices. Perhaps,

sir, you will say a good word for me in England; make it known that this is the paradise of fishermen, and happiness awaits all who come here."

"I will bear you in mind," said L. "But my impression is that you need no recommendation. The place speaks for itself."

"You are very good, sir," returned Madame. "But everything needs recommending and keeping up. Even our friendships have to be extended; for he who makes no new friends will presently find himself alone in the world. Death with his restless scythe is for ever mowing down those about us. Indeed, one never knows whose turn it may be next. The old must die, and the young may die."

This might be philosophy on the part of the landlady, but it was a little in the minor key. We were at breakfast, and she was moving about arranging her plants, picking off dead leaves, brightening them up. Fortunately it did not affect L.'s appetite. He went steadily on to the end, surprise gradually ascending on the waiting-maid's very open countenance.

And then, whilst the carriages were being brought out, we went for the short walk we had taken last night.

The mud in the road was all that was left of yesterday's storm. Everything was fresh, bright and sparkling. The wooden houses all looked newly painted, and, early as it was, shutters were thrown back and windows opened to sun and fresh air. Gardens and orchards were neatly arranged, shrubs looked as though they would bear flowers, trees as if they would yield fruit on the spot, if you only bade them do it. A smiling valley, indeed, this glorious, glowing morning.

The hills rose in greatest beauty, detached chains, each having its own direction, all their separate forms, outlines, and marked individualities.

Again we stood before the little church perched on a moraine, but to-day enveloped in no romantic mist. There was no great beauty about it: no lancet windows or ancient porch dating back to the middle ages. Quiet and sacred and solemn, but that was all, surrounded by the little churchyard with its simple stones and wooden crosses.

Near at hand was the village school, and not far off evidently the vicarage. In fact, as we stood, the door opened and the minister appeared on the threshold in black gown and stiff ruffle, again reminding one of a Puritan just stepped out of a picture by Lely or a contemporary. Why the minister was so elaborately dressed in the early morning, or whether always so dressed, we did not know. He looked at us earnestly—we were too far off for conversation—and perhaps felt inclined to ask us to join him at breakfast. Or perhaps only said to himself: "More fishermen! Of catching of fish there is no end. Would I could spread my own nets to as good purpose; but, like Paul and Apollos, I must plant and water, and leave the result."

It is quite possible that something of this sort passed through his mind. In music certain combinations are bound to be followed by certain others. Had there been time we should have gone up to him—his attitude invited it; as it was, we could only bow to him—felt we must do so in recognition of the “one touch of nature,” members of one great family. He quite understood, bowed in return, and raised his hand as though sending us back into the world with a benediction. Surely it could do no harm, and as surely might do good. I am quite certain that remote country pastor was an exceptional man; a simple man, full of good wishes and holy aspirations, living a devout life. No doubt Norway has many such. Far out of the world, free from the temptations and distractions of great towns, surrounded by the wild and desolate beauties of nature, communing with everlasting hills and contemplating serene skies, they must needs live very close to heaven.

We left him there; a tall portly figure, with an abundance of hair turning white, crowning his head with glory, standing out vividly in the sunshine, his open door behind him hospitably wide.

Retracing our steps to the inn, where windows were still closed and no one seemed moving, we found the carriages ready and the landlady prepared to see us off—she and she only.

“My husband is away,” explained Madame. “He was off by five o’clock this morning, having to see to the buying of horses. You know that the Nordfjord is a famous district for horses. The breed is said to belong to the original *fjord race*. They have perhaps degenerated a little, but are still beautiful in form and colour, and hardy and enduring. It is amazing how much work they will do, and if well treated to what great age they live. And now, sirs, you depart, and I am sorry. Would you had stayed longer and seen all the beauties of our neighbourhood. But patience! you will one day return. I hope I may be here to do my best and make you comfortable. We never know. The old must die, and the young may die.”

With this cheerful conclusion, and with sadness in her eyes, she gazed after us until a sharp turn took us out of sight.

It was indeed a glorious morning, in the last degree exhilarating; a freshness in the air which seemed like draughts of champagne; the sun warm and dazzling. Our interesting landlady had not exaggerated the beauties of the road. We crossed the bridge again over the Jölster, at the foot of which was a row of small white houses, evidently the Bond-Street of Förde, where people supplied their humble wants, contentedly going without what they could not obtain.

That impossibility of possession is a great help to economy. “How did you become so rich?” I once asked a friend who had been the architect of their own fortune, and were now in possession of a comfortable £10,000 a year. “I read Sam Smiles,” they laughed, “and I had no wants. That is the great secret. There is nothing like *thrift*. Fortunes are saved, not made, as a rule. As the Scotch say,

'It's the mickle that makes the muckle,' And," they were good enough to add, "having neither chick nor child, I mean to leave you the half of my fortune."

The pity of it was that they quite forgot that part of the matter, and left me not a fraction.

And so it may be that the people of Förde are comfortably filling the stocking hanging in the chimney-corner, seeing that, whatever their desires, the supply is limited.

We rolled over the bridge, turned to the right and passed up the Devonshire lane, leaving Hafstad's small hotel on the left. The village itself is called *Hafstad i Förde*, abbreviated to Förde. Farther



THE MOVAND.

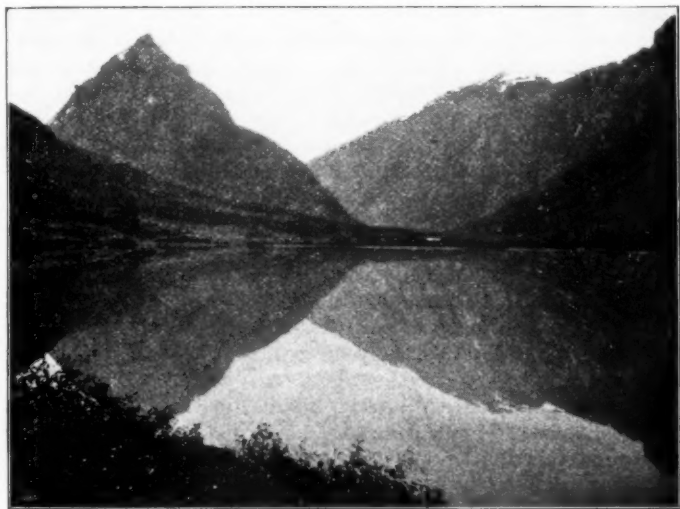
on, the mountains fell away, disclosing the zigzags we had come down last night; and, in a sort of upright ravine, a huge cleft in the rugged rocks black as ink, the white, frothing, foaming waterfall pouring its volume down to the level of the valley. The water chased itself in lace-like patterns, and in the brilliant sunshine the ascending spray took all the colours of the rainbow.

The scene was a dream of beauty, and whilst the mountains were magnificent and majestic, the broad, smiling, fertile plain was the very realisation of a Happy Valley, where men cultivated the fruits of the earth, and lived, if they chose, the life of an earthly paradise.

The river was on our right, and we followed its running, sparkling waters until we reached the *Movand*, a small lake into which the Jølster runs, flowing in at one end and out at the other.

All down the valley, on both sides, here and there were picturesque homesteads, signs of care and thrift everywhere visible; at one spot a large white building, the agricultural school of *Mo*, where they are trying to introduce a little science into the tilling of the earth. It was one of the most striking parts of the valley, for on the mountains behind fell the splendid Huldrefos, its volume of water increased by yesterday's heavy rains.

The hillsides were dark with pine woods—woods that ran down into the level plains. Skirting the lake we passed through one of these forests, exquisite and fragrant, the trees forming a cool cathedral archway overhead, through which the sun glinted and



EGGE.

gleamed and cast long shadows athwart our path. The little horses seemed to feel the exhilarating influence, shook their heads, and wanted no whip to urge them forward, but frisked and gambolled in the shafts at the risk of breaking the fragile conveyances, or upsetting us in the way. Squirrels came and looked at us, showing no signs of fear. Apparently war is not waged against them here as in England, where the little graceful creatures of our woods and forests threaten to become extinct. They should be sacred as the swallows.

It is impossible to go through Norway without being struck by the extreme care and loving-kindness with which its people treat all animals. No doubt there are exceptions, but as a rule, cruelty seems very foreign to the Norwegian disposition. The English would do well to cultivate the virtue.

The river is an earthly paradise to the fisherman, for it is well stocked with trout; but to-day, as yet, they had peace. We were in advance of the world; had left the followers of old Izaak still dreaming that man never is but always to be blest. Or perhaps in our dreams we are so blest, and only in our waking hours for ever chase the phantom.

And so the long drive went on, from beauty to beauty, passing from one impression into another, until at length, and almost to our regret, we reached Nedre Vasenden, which lies at the south-west end of the Jölstervand. Here we were to desert the carriages for a while and travel by steamer.

We were in good time, for the steamer was still out of sight. Nielsen's Hotel looked quite imposing, but was empty with the exception of an English newly-married couple, who, like the moping owl, seemed to resent any intrusion upon their solitude. When, however, they saw our baggage taken on to the pier by the attentive Skydsgut, they revived again. As Bennett had said, we were now travelling, and should be travelling, out of the beaten track; and, in spite of not being a newly-married couple, one of the great charms of this present visit to Norway lies in the fact that we are unmolested by the *tourist*, against which (I make it neuter, as being neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red-herring) L. railed a morning or two ago, as a modern objectionable element and institution.

We really seemed to possess the country to ourselves. And such country! Even to me, who have visited Norway so often, it is new and unknown, whilst its beauty created an ever-wakening series of surprises.

So we rather forgave the newly-married pair at Nedre Vasenden their resentment, and when the steamer arrived, were relieved to find they had no intention of taking it.

There were, in fact, no passengers but ourselves to begin with. A small, almost toy steamer, with a narrow cabin and an upper deck covered by a fixed awning; its speed resembling its size, but that we did not mind, for the Jölstervand is one of the loveliest lakes in Norway. For my own part, I place it next the Spirillen, and many would place it first.

It is a small lake, only 23 kilometres long, and so narrow that you may enjoy both banks at the same time. The hills with their pine forests rise in great beauty, great diversity of outline and undulation. Nor are they lonely and desolate. Each bank has a good road; many flourishing farmhouses may be distinguished on the slopes, here and there expanding to a small settlement or village.

Once a boat shot out into the stream, and two young Norwegian women came on board, with an abundance of fair hair neatly plaited and arranged, and handkerchiefs of many colours crossed over the shoulders. One of them had a sad expression, and every now and then tears were furtively brushed from the eyes. We wondered what the grief. Whether

leaving home for the first time to go into service—but she looked above that—or whether banished from home to place distance between herself and an ineligible lover. And if the latter (a sentimental look about her suggested the possibility), whether banishment would cure the malady. Propinquity may be a dangerous thing, but to determined lovers the distance dividing the poles does not always bring separation.

We were a long time performing our 23 kilometres.

Presently on the left we stopped at a large village lying most picturesquely on the wooded slopes. Quite a small crowd of people stood on the little pier and came on board—Norwegian rustics. The young women, very neatly dressed, carried umbrellas that would have cheered the heart of Mrs. Gamp. All went below and filled up the little cabin, sitting in two rows facing each other, and talking with a great deal of sound, though perhaps not much sense—a sentiment I seem to have met with in the immortal old *Vicar*.

Every now and then a chorus of laughter seemed to announce the presence of a wit amongst them: though very poor wit, or no wit at all, often provokes mirth, the nonsense of the speaker suiting the nonsense of the hearers; especially when, as on this occasion, a few bashful swains accompany the maidens.

Besides these, a group of noisy schoolboys had come on board, and squatted themselves in the prow of the steamer.

One boy, strong and hideous, carried a large sack capable of holding a hundredweight, filled with apples, nuts, and some heavy-looking kind of *duff* or dough peculiar to Norwegian repasts, which he tore with his teeth like a wild animal. Into this sack he frequently dived, giving himself Benjamin's portion, and knocking on the head with no light hand any who attempted poaching on their own account. A large fat boy, he, with blown-out cheeks, an enormous head, and a face of strong determination coupled with an entire absence of conscientious scruple. Already he ruled his school-fellows, and would grow into a leader of men. We wondered whether we saw in him a future prime minister of Norway, a Paul Kruger, or the founder of a new republic. Whatever his ambitions, obstacles would never be allowed to stand in his way. By the time we reached our journey's end the sack was more than half empty.

"He is just like a cow in a clover field," laughed L., "and doesn't know how to stop eating. I hope the same remedy won't be necessary to subdue the effect. But," looking round on water and hills, sky and sunshine, "what a wonderful journey! It would be hard to match this lake in beauty. I almost prefer it to the Spirillen."

"You have only done the Spirillen in wet weather," I replied. "In sunshine its charm comes home to one like the familiar face and voice of an old friend—an indescribable fascination. Nevertheless this lake is a dangerous rival, with finer mountains and more variety. Here we are at last at Övre Vasenden, or Skei, as it is called. How well it stands on the water!"

"I almost wish we were remaining here," said L. "We would take a boat and turn fishermen. The old skipper says the lake is full of trout."

A tall, grave man, that skipper of the tiny steamer, who looked as though he had never smiled in his life. He, too, knew a little English, and was curiously exercised on our behalf; questioning us as to where we had come from, whither going, what we thought of Norway, and similar information; all evidently prompted by kindness, a desire that fair skies should smile upon our travels. His navigation was not intricate, his responsibilities were small; he had leisure to devote to philanthropy



NEAR EGGE.

Thus we left the little steamer, all its wonderful surroundings, with unusual reluctance.

"Past one o'clock," said L. as we set foot on land; "I hope they do not think dinner at Skei a work of supererogation. It would be painful to undeceive them, as we undoubtedly should. *Skei!* It sounds so much like *She*, that I can't hear it without thinking of Rider Haggard's beautiful horror, and see the terrible thing shrivelling up before me."

A few yards brought us to the hotel, where the landlady spoke excellent English, and proved everything that was civil and obliging. She seemed a superior person, and about her, also, there was a somewhat depressed air, as though the world had proved disappointing or the hotel had not come up to her expectations.

Dinner, she informed L. in answer to anxious inquiries, would be ready in about an hour. L. made a grimace.

"Do you think I shall be alive?" he asked, turning to me. "Madame, it is a serious thing in our country to be guilty of manslaughter. However, I will try to put up with it; will do that which Nature abhors, exist upon a vacuum."

So we went out and took a walk by the side of the lake.

The hot sunshine sparkled upon the water, the air seemed full of rainbow colours. Our little steamer was moored to the landing-stage, waiting her hour of departure and unloading logs of wood taken on board on our upward way. The future prime minister had disap-



EGGE.

peared with sack and subjects. Everything was quiet and peaceful. There was a strange charm about the place, and one longed to encamp here. It was bright, open, exhilarating; the sun-flashes upon the water danced in sheer wildness of spirits at all this amazing, overwhelming beauty of Nature. Overhead the sky was blue and brilliant, without a vestige of cloud or vapour.

"The difference between yesterday and to-day is inconceivable," said L.; "a rapid transition from the Inferno to Paradise. I feel to-day as though I could fly, or jump over the moon, or move the world. My heart beats with philanthropy," he laughed, "and I should like all mankind to be happy as I am. Pope is altogether wrong. On such a day one *is* blest, and there is no desire for anything beyond—the *ultima thule* of contentment."

"Only because it all specially appeals to us," I returned. "Others might not see or feel half that we do. It is the old story—man only understands Shakespeare by the Shakespeare within him."

"Oft quoted but true," laughed L. "Let us be thankful that we are favoured with a large measure of Shakespeare! I wonder what he would have thought of this scene?"

"Probably just what we are thinking."

"I have always looked upon him, since I thought about him at all, as a man of two natures," said L.; "inspired with pen in hand; writing he knew not how or whence, so much was it above the mere atom. Altogether a different being with the pen laid down: very human, with human aims to be carried out by commonplace means, and human weaknesses to battle with. I doubt if Shakespeare knew the extent of his gift."

"He lived in crude times," I replied, "and was centuries ahead of them."

"What he would have been had he lived now," said L. "But this age could not produce a Shakespeare; he was in advance, not only of his own age, but of all ages, just as Wagner in music. It seems impossible to get beyond Wagner. He has reached the limit."

We were walking by the side of the lake; blue sky and sunshine above, blue flashing water beneath; an intensely hot day, everything about us rich and luxuriant; the velvety grass gemmed with innumerable flowers. Forget-me-nots and wild pansies grew in profusion, and a hundred other specimens might be found for the seeking. There were vast pine woods, where the sun threw wonderful lights and shadows; where one entered into the cool shade, the solemn depth and silence of the forest; where nothing stirred and not the flutter of a bird on the wing was seen or heard. Given perpetual youth and no change in the condition of things, and this might well be paradise, as L. declared.

"We are going on to Egge," he said, as we sat on the banks in the sunshine, and gazed over the flashing water at the opposite wooded hills, whilst he idly threw pebbles into the lake for the pleasure of seeing the widening circles. "But I have a presentiment——"

"Second-sight," I corrected.

"Amendment accepted," he laughed. "Second-sight tells me we should do better to remain here. Egge cannot possibly be as favoured as this enchanted country. Let us not go hence."

I shook my head. There can be an immense amount of wisdom in the shake of the head; it says so little, may mean so much, and possesses the Gladstonian merit of being easily interpreted either way after the event.

"Nothing can be more charming than this," I replied. "I wish we could spend a week here, but it is safer to keep to Bennett's directions. We have a boat to catch to-morrow at Sandene, and if we don't push

on to Egge might possibly lose it. One is rather handicapped in these places."

L. gave a huge sigh, which certainly seemed to come from a vast vacuum. He consulted his watch.

"More than time to return," he cried, jumping up. "Madame's chef will be using unparliamentary language. What a pity the feast of reason and flow of soul does not satisfy the inner man!"

"It would certainly save a great amount of trouble," I laughed.

We made our way back to the hotel, leaving the banks of the lake, the woods and wildflowers behind us, all steeped in sunshine and rainbow-colour. Madame was standing on the steps looking out for us.

"You have lingered long, sirs," she cried, "or perhaps lost your way in the woods. Dinner is more than ready. If anything happens," laughing and turning to L., "it will not be murder, but suicide. And I cannot see any indication of 'unsound mind,' as they say at your inquests."

Madame headed her table, supported by a lady friend who was spending some weeks in the hotel.

"For the sake of the air," she was good enough to explain. "To me, there is no place in summer so delightful as Skei. It possesses all the beauties of Nature combined with one of the purest airs in Norway. I come here regularly for two months every year, and the time passes like a dream. We are never overrun with crowds, since this is out of the beaten track, and Madame is a most hospitable hostess. The rest of the year I live in Bergen, but in the pleasanter part, near the new park; my villa is just outside the gates. If you were there, sirs, when I am in residence, I should be happy to receive you. I love the English."

This was flattering, and we could only return the compliment by declaring our admiration for the Norwegians.

"But I am not Norwegian," laughed the lady; "I am a Swede. My husband was Norwegian, and when he died two years ago I had taken root in Bergen. He left me so comfortably off, with so charming a villa, that I had no wish to return to my own people. In fact, I have many friends where I live; I should now find few in the home of my first youth."

"Samivel, beware of vidders," murmured L. beneath his breath. I just caught the words.

"You were observing, sir—?" said the lady. "I did not quite hear that remark."

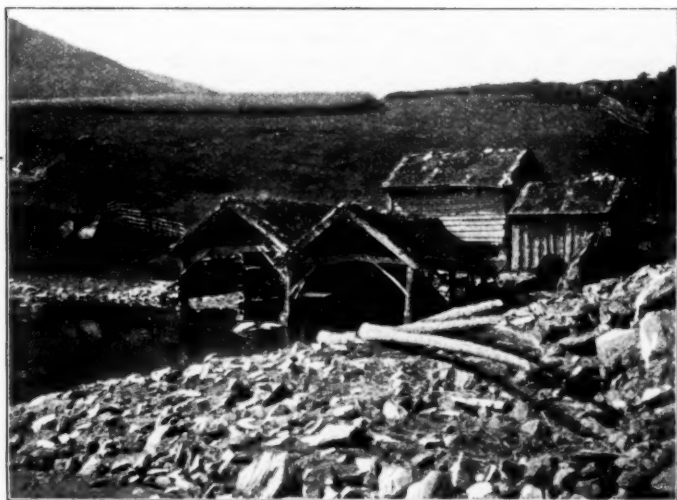
"That your husband, Madame, was a fortunate man to possess so charming a wife," returned L. unblushingly; "and that I am surprised you have been allowed to remain unappropriated for two whole years."

"Ah, sir, it is not for want of offers," returned Madame, with quite a rising colour. "But I had a good husband for my first, and will not tempt Fate to give me a bad second. And to tell you the truth," she laughed, "I enjoy my liberty too much to resign it."

Madame at the table sighed as she delicately ate her fish. We wondered whether she had a husband who controlled her liberty and perhaps tyrannised over her. This might account for her slightly subdued mood and manner.

"Madame, you speak English admirably," said L., turning to the hostess. "Surely you have lived in England?"

"No, sir," returned Madame, "I have never had that advantage. In fact, I have never travelled beyond a journey I once took to Sweden and Denmark. I like the Danes. Your Princess of Wales is a Dane, and for me the prettiest and most graceful woman in the world: I saw her several times in Copenhagen. You are very good to praise my



ON THE WAY TO SANDENE.

English, and I will not pretend that I do not speak it well. The secret is that I learned it thoroughly as a child. My parents were rich; I never expected to occupy my present position—though honest work is honourable to all. They spoke English well themselves, and I was educated by an English governess who lived with us until I was eighteen. The consequence is that I speak English almost better than Norwegian."

"And did you, Madame, also live in Bergen?" asked L.

"No, sir, in Christiania, where my father was one of the leading men. He was in the Storting—you call it Parliament; a Stadsraader—what you would call a Minister—and a great favourite with the king, for he was a strong conservative. Norway, as you know, is very republican. The people know no better, but it may be they will know

some day by sad experience. You, sirs, are conservative. I can always tell a conservative at once. The radicals have a bad expression. In fact they, are not respectable."

"That must be second-sight, Madame," laughed L. "There I can shake hands with you, for I also possess the gift."

"No, sir," returned Madame, "I cannot pretend to anything supernatural. It is not second-sight, but instinct, combined, it may be, with observation. I have an analytical mind, and am always unconsciously criticising and drawing deductions."

We had now reached the stage of dessert. Madame had given us an excellent dinner, and even L. declared there was no longer any



NEAR SANDENE.

danger of manslaughter or suicide, as he rose from the table and bowed to the ladies.

"We take coffee on the verandah, sirs," said Madame; "it is more agreeable to overlook the lovely waters of the lake and the beautiful pine-clad hills."

"This is indeed an enchanted spot," said L., "and we leave it with the greatest reluctance. I am quite sure that Egge, where we stay the night, will not be half so charming."

"Egge?" returned Madame. "It always makes me shudder. I think it the essence of gloom and depression, and am surprised Mr. Bennett should place you there for the night, for he seldom makes a mistake. He must have his reasons; yet would it be better to push on to Red, where again you are in the midst of lovely scenery."

We were now seated in the verandah, basking in the sunshine and enjoying our black coffee, roasted to a turn and perfectly made—a combination only too rare in these days. All the exquisite view was in front of us, the more prized, perhaps, and the more enjoyed, that we had to part from it so soon. Just in front of us the little steamer was putting off on her afternoon journey to Nedre Vasenden—possibly to bring back the devoted bride and bridegroom. The captain, tall, grave, hands in pockets, stood on the deck, and bowed his farewell as he steamed away. Not a muscle of his face moved.

"A good man," said Madame, "and a worthy. Another, also, who has had sorrow in life—we are none of us without it. He, too, has come down in the world. His very fine vessel was wrecked, and through no fault or neglect of his own; but he could never get another, and has now to be the humble conductor of this little lake steamer. He will probably never be anything else. Just enough pay to keep the wolf from the door. He bears it well. If he is not particularly cheerful, at least he never complains. That seems to me true philosophy, the test of a strong mind. It would be well if we could all do likewise."

We lingered in this enchanted land as long as it seemed prudent, then departed. Carriages awaited us at the door, and Madame and the lady from Bergen came out to speed the parting guests; so that with the ostler and the Skydsguts—they gave us one for each carriage on this occasion—we formed quite a congregation.

"I wish you fair weather and good success, sirs," said Madame; "a pleasant journey wherever you go, and no mistakes to look back upon."

"Madame," returned L., "we are infallible. Wherever we go, whatever we decide, a choice between two doubtful alternatives—all turns out right; we never make a mistake."

"Perhaps, sir, your second-sight has something to do with it. To make no mistakes is rare. To err is human, my governess used to say—I forget the rest of it."

"To forgive, divine," said L., finishing the quotation. "No, Madame, it is simply infallibility, nothing more or less. Of course only in this one matter of travelling."

"Then I will call it your guardian angel," returned Madame. "That pleases me better. Infallibility sounds Popish, somehow. The poor old Pope pretends to be infallible, and all the while knows he is nothing of the kind. Conservatism and no Popery! that is my motto."

"And, sirs," said the fair widow, as we took up the reins—mere pieces of rope—and prepared to start, "if you find yourselves in Bergen when I am in residence, do not fail to come and see me. It will be a true pleasure to entertain you, and tender you the hospitality of a real Norwegian dinner."

At last we were off, but felt we were leaving behind us the best of the sunshine and happiness of the day.

We left an enchanted land, it is true, and yet enchantment seemed to follow us. The way from Skei to Egge was varied, the scenery magnificent. We climbed a hill and passed two small lakes, in which the water was transparent crystal, reflecting the beauties of mountain and sky. Hills now closed in, forming narrow valleys, now fell away, leaving open plains, where pine trees grew tall and strong, rippling waters sent forth their music, and all Nature seemed laughing for very happiness and beauty and abundant fertility. Where wildflowers could grow, there we found them, and the flaming, rich, and splendid colours of some of the fungi were beyond imagining.

Then suddenly all changed its character. We came to a river of which the waters were almost blood-red, and passed into a valley in which smiling verdure and sunshine, all the luxuriance of Nature, seemed unknown. It was as though the light had gone out of the sky and a shadow had crossed our path. A narrowing valley, huge precipitous walls of barren rock towering on either side; walls of immense height, dark, sometimes black as ink, aspiring, it almost seemed, to do battle with the sky—so gigantic that, falling, they would surely have shaken the earth to its centre.

The sky was still clear and luminous; behind these walls of rock the sun was still shining, but only when directly overhead could it throw its cheering influence upon this valley of blood-red waters.

This was the Vaatedal, one of the remarkable valleys of Norway. It has been compared to the Valley of Gudvangen, but the comparison raises hopes for the Vaatedal not to be fulfilled. Gudvangen is infinitely finer, and is scarcely equalled in Norway.

The valley widened for a time, admitting more light and sky, and less frowning effect. So we went on until suddenly, and long before we expected it, we reached Egge. The Skydsguts for once, probably to serve their own ends, had urged on the horses, and we had done the journey in less time than usual. It was still broad daylight.

We confessed to a certain shock on arriving. The hotel was gloomy and depressing as Skei had been the opposite. The valley had narrowed again, and the house was placed on a barren slope. Huge, perpendicular rocky walls rose behind it and in front. There was no sunshine anywhere; the valley was cold and cheerless. The very Skydsguts seemed to feel the influence, for no sooner had they deposited us, bag and baggage, than they turned tail, whipped up their horses and fled. A short flight; they were only hurrying to the stables, where no doubt boon companions awaited them.

We turned to the hotel, and a woman stood at the top of the flight of steps to receive us. She was quite fashionably dressed, was young and good-looking, with a striking appearance and a mass of golden hair. Her English was strongly American, but so fluent that we at first thought she belonged to the land of the stars and stripes. However, she proved to be Norwegian. When, later, we complimented her upon her fluency: "Oh, yes," she answered, naively, "I know I

speak English quite well. It came to me without trouble—for I have the gift of language. I learnt it over in America."

It needed none of L.'s second-sight to discern this. We could not at first make her out, and thought she must be the daughter of old Kristensen the landlord. Yet she looked altogether too flourishing and fashionable even for that; for he was a plain and simple man, very little in evidence about the place, apparently leaving the house in absolute possession of the womenkind, since we neither saw nor heard him in it.

Later in the evening, when darkness had fallen, the lamps were lit, and we were writing letters, she came into the sitting-room, having changed her dress to some light, gauzy, and very becoming material,



SANDENE.

sat down upon the sofa "as though to the manner born," and took up some light fancy-work. She really looked very ladylike and handsome, and had sufficient dignity and *sang-froid* for a duchess. In short, in this depressing, forlorn, and neglected Egge station she seemed quite thrown away.

On first arriving, however, she escorted us up the steep wooden staircase, showed us all the rooms of the house, and bade us choose which we liked best. True, it was all done with an air and a grace, as if to intimate that though serving, it was really her place to be served; but there was no abruptness or unwillingness about her. Our rooms chosen—both had wonderful blue papers and combinations of impossibly coloured roses—our majestic cicerone asked us what time it would be our pleasure to dine.

"Dine!" cried L., with sparkling eyes. "For the first time since we have been in Norway, I hear it called by its proper name. They call it supper, and turn us all into schoolboys again."

"Yes, I know," returned Hebe complacently. "But I have not been abroad and travelled for nothing, and I know that you gentlemen call it dinner. It *is* dinner with you, but in Norway it is really supper, as a rule. The chief meal is in the middle of the day."

"A bad arrangement," said L. "For if you take a heavy meal you are stupid for the rest of the day; and if a light one you are half starved and jeopardise your constitution."

"That sounds like the dawning of a new disease," laughed this mysterious Hebe. "To-night, at any rate, you shall dine, and it shall be ready at half-past seven."

"And tell the *chef* to put forth all his skill," said L.

"Our *chef* wears petticoats and a mob-cap," laughed Hebe, "but I have met many a *chef* with far more pretension and much less skill. Gentlemen, you will now take a walk before daylight dies. It will give you appetite for our *chef's* artistic efforts. You will hardly call this the Happy Valley; it is gloominess personified. Mr. Bennett must have planted you here for two reasons: first, because he knows you will be comfortable; secondly, because it is no doubt a fairer distribution of your journey—of time and road."

"One comes across curious people and experiences," said L. as we left the inn and turned down the valley. "That young person is really a mystery. I cannot make out if she is the wife or the daughter of the establishment, or merely an appendage."

"No doubt the daughter," I replied; and proved to be wrong.

We went down the valley. Just beyond the hotel it began to widen, was less gloomy and frowning; a certain amount of verdure and vegetation asserted itself; the river had lost its blood-red colour, and expanded as though it had overflowed its bounds; smaller hills like ruined castles stood up here and there with most picturesque effect. All looked wild and rugged.

And in the midst of this solitude and desolation we came upon a small settlement of houses, a miniature village, that seemed to have no reason for existence. There were even one or two in course of construction, but the workmen had all fled; no sound, no sign of life came from any one of the habitations. It might have been death-stricken, plague-stricken, or fossilised like the petrified ruined castles that found their reflection in the widened stream.

"A deserted village indeed!" cried L. "A Valley of dry bones, but with no Ezekiel to bring them back to life. How could Bennett plant us here, with Skei in the background and Red in front of us!"

As though to contradict him, at that moment there came from behind a house on the slope a small hunchback, a gibbering idiot, who, catching sight of us, mouthed and pointed and made uncanny noises peculiar to idiots, then shambled out of sight again: a distressful object.

L. shuddered, susceptible to the hideous in Nature as to the beautiful.

"Quasimodo," he remarked; "a sort of object Victor Hugo would have revelled in and made much of; physically as distorted as Zola makes the moral. Query: ought there not to be a lethal chamber for these afflicted idiots, bodies without souls, as it would almost appear? For my part, it seems a question whether there should not be a lethal chamber for hopeless criminals, those who, given chance after chance of reforming, only sink deeper in crime. Cumberers of the earth."

The valley grew more beautiful as we went on, frowning rocky walls passing into hills and outlines more diversified and broken, more agreeable, but far less majestic than that Valley of Rocks with its blood-red waters we had left behind us. It lured us insensibly, until the waning daylight warned us it was time to turn. Daylight dies soon and quickly in these valleys.

As we retraced our steps, we suddenly came upon a party of four French people, walking one behind another, like a string of turkeys. They were altogether a new element, and seemed to have sprung from the skies. Where they really had come from was rather a mystery; certainly not from Skei.

"Quite a crowd intruding upon our solitary reign," said L., when they had passed. "I wonder whether they are staying at Egge, preparing to devour the *chef's* artistic dishes, and leave us nothing but the fragments? They the oysters, we the shell, like the lawyers and the Court of Chancery."

But there was an evident determination in their walk, a pushing forward, suggesting no turning back. And in about half-an-hour we had the satisfaction of meeting an empty trille, piled up with luggage behind, evidently galloping to overtake the fugitives—not from justice but from the Valley of Desolation.

Again we passed through the Deserted Village, but this time the idiot did not show himself—for which we were duly grateful. The ruined castles were all about us in their rugged and petrified grandeur; and when we at last reached the inn, for the second time that day we were a little behind time.

"Nothing tries a good cook, sirs, like unpunctuality," said Hebe, coming forward at our entrance. "And when she has been putting forward her best efforts, it is a sort of adding insult to injury."

As I have said, Hebe spoke fluently, never hesitating for a word, but there was always the American accent to offend.

"We will make up for it by a splendid appetite," laughed L. "No matter how many courses, I undertake to clear them all."

And in that little out-of-the-world, forlorn, desolate, and depressing inn, Hebe placed before us the best dinner we had found in Norway, not even excepting that on board the Sogne steamer.

Not that she waited upon us herself; there she evidently drew the line, and did not come near the dining-room. But it was quite possible

that she was behind the scenes, to some extent superintending. The dishes were passed through a hatch carefully guarded, and what lay on the other side was kept impenetrably secret. We caught neither sight nor sound of the *chef* in petticoats and mob-cap, who was certainly a genius; but she had no cause to complain of want of appreciation.

"After all," said L., "Bennett did not go so far wrong in placing us here for the night. If the outer aspect of the place is desolate, within we have fallen upon a land of corn and wine. They do their best to prevent our indulging in low spirits—and succeed."

In the sitting-room they brought us coffee, equal to that we had found at Skei; and presently, when we were writing letters, Hebe, as we have said, came in all frills and flounces and fairy gossamer, properly worn and carried off with an air and fitting like a glove, took her seat on the sofa near the lamp, and began her fancy-work.

Not the least remarkable thing about her was her unconsciousness of self, an entire absence of *gaucherie*.

"An *aplomb* and a self-possession gained in America," said L. "The Americans all have it, though, as a rule, joined to a great want of repose—that distinctive mark of a gentlewoman. Now it is singular that this Hebe, in a humble station of life, has a good deal of this repose about her. Come, let us solve the mystery.—You are a daughter of the house—Miss Kristensen, I presume?" he said, laying down his pen and politely turning to the lady. "This must be a terribly dull place to live in."

"Indeed, no, sir," returned Hebe. "I am not Miss Kristensen, and have never aspired to that honour. It would, as you remark, involve living in this dull place all the year round, and that would drive me mad."

"Then how comes it you are here at all, if I may make so bold as to ask?" pursued L. "For really you and the place seem ill-fitted to each other."

"The answer is very simple," replied Hebe. "I am here as house-keeper. It is not so bad a place as it looks, and it suited me to come; just as by-and-by it will suit me to go—at the Fall, as the Americans say. Then I shall journey to Christiania, where, if all goes well, I am to marry a rich merchant that I met in New York, to whom I became betrothed. In the meantime, being of an independent turn of mind, I engaged myself here for the summer."

"But you are Norwegian?" asked L.

"Yes, sir; and my father was a simple farmer. For all that—I may indeed say because of that—he belongs to the aristocracy of Norway, one of its oldest families. My brother now has the property, but I would not live at home."

So there was the solution of the mystery; and yet hardly the whole solution, so superior were her manners and conversation to anything one could expect from a simple Norwegian farm, though its owner belonged to the "ancient aristocracy." I have seen not a few of them

in Norway in the more primitive posting days—men as rough, and rude, and uncultivated as they were proud and overbearing.

We followed up our conversation with Hebe, who narrated her adventures in America, some of which were of a startling and amusing character. Then wishing her good-night, and every happiness and prosperity in the future, we retired to our blue rooms—the only blue things about us, as L. remarked.



SKYDSGUT'S DILEMMA.

"I consider your husband a very fortunate man," was his parting salutation to Hebe.

"Ah, sir," she returned, laughing and blushing, "if you saw him and knew him, you would say that luck was not all on his side."

"Delighted to hear it," replied L. "May I be as fortunate when my time comes!"

We climbed the steep flight of wooden stairs, and L. accompanied me to my room, that together we might look out upon the dark night. The window was wide open, the atmosphere really freezing. Here in this valley, where the sun scarcely ever penetrates, the night air is

almost always keen and cold, and a fire all the year round is welcome. It is, I repeat, a Valley of Desolation, and I, the last man in the world given to the blues or despondency, should soon die amidst such surroundings.

A dark world indeed we looked upon. Confronting us, like a black pall of measureless extent, the mountains stretched heavenwards. In the valley, we knew, though unseen, ran the shallow, broad,



AT SANDENE.

babbling river. Above, in the narrow firmament, the stars shone and flashed and travelled onwards. A solemn, ghostly scene. Utter silence reigned—silence and solitude. Nothing stirred, no complaining owl or flitting bat; the gloom of a sepulchre.

"And it looks like one," said L. with a slight shiver. "A great living tomb; a Valley of dry bones, as I said just now, with no prophet to bring them back to life and movement. I don't mind one night here; but even our unflagging spirits," he laughed, "would droop and languish and expire if we had to spend a second night at Egge. Yes, even in spite of that *cordon bleu* in petticoats and mob-cap, coupled with the charms

of Mistress Hebe. Really they gave us a splendid dinner; everything of the best, and unlimited in quantity. Well, I am off to my couch. I hope I shan't dream of Miss Hebe, for she is appropriated."

"Much more likely to dream of the *cordons bleus*," I laughed, "who is probably a toothless old hag in her sixtieth winter!"

"Et tu, Brute!" laughed L. in response; and he went off to his room singing in a tone of bravado—

"Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?
Shall my cheeks look pale with care
Because another's rosy are?
Be she fairer than the day,
Or the flow'ry meads in May,
If she be not fair for me,
What care I for whom she be?"

It seemed much more than twenty-four hours since we had arrived last night at Förde, thinking it a damp, depressing hole, but Egge was still more out of the world, still more tomb-like. The night, however, passed quickly, and I awoke feeling there was sunshine somewhere, though it did not reach the valley. But the sky above was cloudless, and looking down towards the ruined castles and small settlement, nothing of which was visible from this point, one felt that it was only necessary to get out of all this Valley of Desolation to feel reanimated in a warm and radiant atmosphere.

We started soon after breakfast in carriages, which Hebe took care to provide. Amongst her virtues she had determination of character, and here, at any rate, her will seemed law. This morning she appeared without flounces and furbelows, in her working dress, but looking altogether different from the ordinary housekeeper. Breakfast was in its way equal to last night's dinner, and so it came to pass that after all we did not regret staying at Egge. Not that we would repeat the experiment. Hebe would not be there, and perhaps the *cordons bleus* would have departed this life—the two only conditions that made this Valley of dry bones tolerable.

Away we went, with Hebe's good wishes, repeating our own for her happiness and prosperity, promising to call the next time we found ourselves in Christiania and make her acquaintance as a dignified matron. Away we went down the valley, which soon broadened and beautified. The air, which had been keen at Egge, gradually relaxed its tension, and presently we found ourselves once more in full sunshine.

"Hurrah!" cried L., with so much energy that the pony started forward and the Skydsgut fell off his perch on to the dusty road, and dropped his bag of fodder for the horse. "Hurrah! life and light and warmth once more. Good-bye to the Valley of dry bones, that living tomb! Here we return to the true Norway."

And, indeed, Norway at its best, for the scenery, as we passed

out of the valley and turned to the left, was almost sublime. The mountains, high and majestic, splendid in form, snow-capped, stood in bold outlines against the brilliant sky, falling into the background as we journeyed, so that we seemed to leave behind us a vast whirling amphitheatre of eternal hills. On our left a sparkling river ran its course, on our right were richly-wooded slopes: a valley verdant and smiling and full of life as the Vaadalen was barren and desolate: each attracting in different ways. Here the air was delightfully warm, the sun glowed in the heavens, all nature was happy and laughing. Then the road narrowed into another Devonshire lane; there were high hedges, green and fragrant, and beyond the hedges more woods and forests; the river ran over its rocky bed; cattle strayed beside the banks; far in the background was that magnificent amphitheatre of snow-capped mountains. And suddenly, before we were prepared for it, in the midst of a perfect paradise, we found ourselves at Red.

Few stations in Norway are more beautifully situated; few equal it; lovelier than Skei, in spite of a nameless charm about the latter not felt at Red; the well-built inn, cheerful and comfortable, the people apparently indifferent and not very obliging; suffering, perhaps, from a fit of indigestion, which would pass away and leave them smiling and civil.

But the beauty of the place was marvellous and amazing. The inn stood at the end of the lovely lane, with tall trees in the neighbourhood, and a sloping garden of exquisite flowers. Stretching below was the Bredheimsvand, loveliest of Norwegian lakes, surrounded by hills sloping and wooded. On the left bank was the church of Bredheim and the village houses, all thrown into relief by the background of green undulations. The clear blue waters of the lake reflected all objects and mirrored the sky above, a sky so radiant, a sun so dazzling, it was difficult to look upwards.

"Paradise," said L., after we had gazed long in mute surprise. "Paradise, if ever paradise was here below. 'If there be an Elysium on earth, it is this, it is this!'" he quoted. "Had Hebe and the *cordon bleu* not made us so comfortable at Egge, I should feel inclined to quarrel with Bennett for not sending us on to Red for the night. Imagine this scene by moonlight—or sunrise! More beautiful than Vik, lovelier than Norheimsund. By the way, I wonder where the Graces are, and how they are, and wish I had asked them to write me an account of their day at the Vöringfos. This place seems deserted, but the landlady says people are staying here for fishing, and have gone off for the day. We shall have to go off too, and leave this paradise, if we are to catch our steamer."

We lingered until the last moment, then set off again for Sandene.

This last stage was, if possible, most interesting of all, the ever-winding road constantly bringing us into fresh views. To our right the sloping wooded banks, to our left the flowing river; occasionally we passed under an archway of trees through which the sun gleamed

and cast deep shadows. Everything seemed radiant and sparkling. Now we looked into precipitous depths where the river still ran, now found ourselves on a level with it. Now the scene opened out and the water spread large and round, reflecting the wooded slopes and dark-brown log-huts upon the banks.

We had the whole way to ourselves. Our Skydsgut, a middle-aged man, occasionally attempted a conversation, but his English was limited and broken, and it was impossible to make much out of him.

"I wish this drive would last all day," cried L. "It is so full of charm!"

As he spoke the scene changed. On the brow of a hill we saw a row of houses; other houses dotted about. A few yards farther on, and we looked upon a wonderful panorama. Far down stretched the waters of the Nordsfjord. Nestling on the slopes and lining the borders of the water were the houses of Sandene. Hills surrounded the lake-like waters. Down the long steep road we bowled, until, nearing the end, outside a brown wooden hut a woman sat at a spinning-wheel. She was undeniably ugly, but the scene was picturesque; and when we photographed her, and presented her with a small silver coin, she brightened up, lost some of her ugliness, and went on spinning with fresh vigour.

A few minutes more and we had reached the hotel, a hundred yards from which the steamer was patiently waiting her hour of departure.

THE PRICE OF AN INSPIRATION

GUTEN Morgen, Fräulein Katinka!"

She menaced him over the banisters with her violin case. "Good-morning, Mr. Carl Brenner! Why don't you speak English? and my name is Kathleen, *not* Katinka!"

He shrugged his shoulders, and the sunshine laughed in his eyes.

"Ach! I have not the brogue, and your Irish tongue runs itself away until I stop you with a big German word."

"*Why* Katinka?" she persisted; "it is most rude to call me anything so ugly."

"It is not ugly, and your 'Käslein' is hard to say. But Katinka! she is of me the ideal—so good. She will cook me my meals—warm me my pantoffeln! Ach! She is hausengel, mit all the kitchen graces at the ends of her fingers."

"How commonplace you are! As if the Goddess of every German did not live in the kitchen and spend her very soul in making him fat. Your Katinka will have no second idea beyond kartoffeln and pickled cabbages!"

He looked down a little shyly, yet smiling.

"But she will love me, and the kartoffeln and cabbages shall be but her care of me. Love has a thousand voices, yet are they not lowly or despised."

"But your imaginary Katinka, with her soul all frittered away with little things, how will she ever know enough to help you? She will live alone, outside your life."

"You mistake," he answered, with mingled pride and tenderness. "I lean not upon her, but rather she on me, for that is as it should be. And then a too clever wife might burn me my rhymes if they pleased her not, and so break the fine heart of a poet."

She leant a little more towards him, the smile in her dark-blue eyes giving the lie to her sharp words.

"In fact you require a knitting-machine and cook combined. I wish you joy of your Katinka, *when* she is yours."

"Then is the joy sure to come, my Fräulein; but first I would want your pity, that I may only dream of my love, until the golden *thalers* come to visit an empty purse."

"The dream is sometimes best," she answered softly. "It never disappoints. Now one of mine is just coming true, and I am a little frightened."

A certain apprehension drove the gaiety from his face. "This dream then is it—? Ach, no! You would not announce it so. Tell me, mein Fräulein, that I may know what can make you look so happy."

She was indeed radiant, and palpitating with anxiety to share her good news with some one; just then Carl Brenner was a special providence. He was always so charmingly sympathetic in anything that concerned her.

"On Tuesday I am playing at a concert—a *grand* concert!"

"So! At the Conservatoire; but that has happened often before?"

"Now, do you think I am making all this fuss about a mere students' concert? Don't you know I am out of my apprenticeship, and have my name to make?"

"No!" he interrupted, "I make it for you, Katinka the Great!—not the little Käszelein!"

This time he had to defend himself against descending justice, but she was too proud of herself to be severe.

"I am to play two solos at the Grand-Ducal Concert on Tuesday! Was denkst du—— Oh! your detestable German! I mean what do you think of *that*?"

With a quick impulsive motion of his hand he had brushed away her momentary confusion—for in such things Carl had gentle ways—and his enthusiasm quite satisfied her.

"It is wonderful fortune, Fräulein; I congratulate you. So, like another Lorelei sitting aloft in your high chamber, you have made captive the Grand-Ducal ear as his Highness passed by? Wunderlich!"

They both laughed, for it was well known that his Highness could sleep peacefully and enjoyingly through the loudest and most impassioned strains. Even his own regimental brass band, blaring and clashing outside the palace windows, was to him as a lullaby inducing sweet rest. But then he was a brave old man, and had faced cannon and lived through bombardments, so his occasional snores accentuating a dainty pianissimo passage were charitably allowed for.

"He has nothing to do with it. The Directorate have substituted me for Frau Fichte, who is ill. It is a grand chance, one in a thousand, and may mean Paris, London—fame!"

It was no idle boasting, for she recognised her own power, and had worked hard to perfect it. Nothing gives such confidence so much as hard work. Moreover she was speaking to a fellow-student in another branch of art, one who himself had ambitions and eager hopes. They understood each other, and his face reflected the light on hers.

"And I too," he began so eagerly, that his good careful English suffered a little. "There is to me a great chance also. You have heard of the Preisgedicht that shall be chosen by the Heidelberg University before many days?"

She nodded. "But I thought Schiller gold medallists might not compete?"

"Nein! Nein! Es war mir—it was of me the error! The struggle is for them only, and the honour great to the winner."

"But how little time! Have you only just learnt this?"

"I knew it not an hour ago; but I will be ready. I am even working now. It shall mean perchance fame—and my loved ideal!"

She stretched down to him a hand of warm encouragement. "Courage then, brave comrade! for we are both trembling on the brink. But how can your Katinka help you here, unless yours is to be the romance of a cooking-stove!"

He looked up in laughing rebuke. "Ach! das Käslein! I kiss the velvet paw that can only play at scratching. My theme is love, therefore is Katinka already my great inspiration."

A golden ripple of merriment parted them, but as she darted away out of sight he called up the stairs—

"One little moment, Fräulein! Does it happen on Tuesday your concert?"

"Yes," her clear voice answered him, and then became hesitating. "But this time it must only be a tiny bunch of violets. I will wear nothing more extravagant."

"So," he agreed cheerfully, and "so," as every one knows, stands for anything or nothing, just as a German chooses. But Kathleen Haynes little knew as she entered her room so blithely that Carl's preoccupation in his inspired task had made him a little less clear-headed, and that in his mind an English Tuesday confused itself with a German Wednesday before he had written two lines of his poem. But he did not forget her flowers, which were to be rarer than violets.

In pure lightness of heart she went singing to the window and threw it open. What a joyous time had been hers in Weinbergen—a time of hard work, of earnest endeavour and happy play with the glamour and romance of a quaint old German city to gild all her life, and set even its lonely hours with precious stones of remembered glory. It was as the miniature of a young face framed gorgeously with jewels and gold. Nor were such rich surroundings wasted, for she had weaved them cunningly into her work, and she would play wearisome scales by the hour together to the honour of some departed hero who had been great in patience.

Why! just over against her, in the narrow street, the eyes of a great genius had first seen the light. True that a fine statue in a more aristocratic centre bore witness of him, yet it was even better to be able to look into the very room where he had played as a child, and lisped his first prayer.

The gleaming white pigeons seemed to have their own sentiment on the subject, and sunned themselves more benignly on that quaint slanting roof than on any other. Kathleen returned their bows, cooing to them softly in their own tongue—one need only be happy to do such ridiculous things—while from the street below a pleasant babel of busy feet, cheerful voices, and quick laughter proclaimed how good it was to be alive. But few go sadly when the market-place is one great bouquet of flower-laden scents and luscious ripe fruits;

when the ramparts of the city are all vineyards bursting to a rich harvest, with summer itself caught and stayed in the golden meshes to heighten the mellow glory of autumn, and make the vintage rare. Life then is strong and glad; the heart beats merrily, bright ripples are on the river, and in the air a song of plenty and thanksgiving.

No wonder then that Kathleen had to take even the pigeons into her confidence, and make them sharers of her joy, for she was buoyantly elated, and tremulously hopeful of astonishing not the Grand-Duke—for that was beyond her—but the artistic, critical audience which follows in the wake of Grand-Dukes. Amongst such would be, as she knew, her judges, with power to dispose of her future, and Frau Fichte's illness had paved the way to a quick sentence. But she meant to plead her own cause with burning eloquence and win it; conscious power sent the bright flush into her face, the light into her eyes, and again she nodded blithely to the pigeons. Then, too, there was Carl Brenner—such a pleasant background to the picture, in which she mistakenly thought ambition was the central figure. Of course she knew that these sentimental young Germans had pretty poetical ways of expressing themselves, which were only to be lightly heeded.

But was not Carl different from the rest, more earnest even in his merry moments—and, to herself she whispered, more faithful and true of heart? For the present it was enough that they were in a sense fellow-students, which is a close and dear and wholesome companionship—try it, men and maidens, who are weary of playing with each other—and a haze of sunlight veiled all the future.

Once more she and the self-satisfied pigeons mutually genuflected, and then she made herself some coffee—the happiest young soul in all Weinbergen.

Carl Brenner sat at his disordered desk in despair. The cathedral chimes marking every passing quarter of the hour maddened him. They did not pass—they raced; and his pulses beat out the second, until he was conscious of nothing but the remorseless throbbing. To-morrow his work would have to be posted to Heidelberg; he had almost reached the limit of time allowed, and yet even under the stimulus of knowing this—perhaps because of it—he could not finish the poem. Either he had been overtaxing himself, or else for no good reason his powers had momentarily failed him. Genius does sometimes play these unhandsome tricks upon her children, and cannot always be relied upon to work to order. Carl knew perfectly well what he wanted to say and express, but the right language perpetually evaded him. In searching for and choosing a word that pleased him he would forget the context, and knew that the very fire and life of his composition was being extinguished by mere mechanical difficulties.

Throwing aside the pen, he folded his arms on the desk to support

a weary drooping head. No strength of will could avail against the inertia that was creeping like a dead mist over his faculties, and he saw no escape from failure; yet it was hard, with the work so well begun and more than half accomplished.

From the very depth of his despondency he was roused by a certain sound which once he had anathematised—but that was before Kathleen's deep blue eyes had smiled into his—and petitioned of Providence that all music students might be gathered together into one dissonant bunch and solemnly prohibited. But now, although the scale in C Major is not beautiful, even upon a violin, it seemed to him hope personified, and without a moment's hesitation he ascended a single flight of stairs and knocked at Kathleen's door.

Receiving permission he opened it, and in his trouble never noticed her quick disappointed glance at his empty hands. She herself was dressed as daintily as means would permit, and fortunately at homely German courts an ex-pupil of the Conservatoire may play before even Serene Highnesses in a slightly glorified Sunday frock. But it was a sharp disappointment that Carl had so evidently forgotten her flowers—and how pale and strange he looked!

"Mein Fräulein! I am in the saddest difficulty. My poem refuses to finish itself. There is something lacking in me, but I know not what, and the hours are getting few. It might be, that if you played to me even a little the mists would clear."

She knew him as a man of moods, for so the poet is made, but until then she had never seen him dejected or cast down. She rose instantly, her whole heart drawn to him in his need, and feeling strong to help. How fortunate that excitement and unrest had made her be ready so much too soon! Why, there was an hour, nearly two, before she and the violin need set out! She would not even mention her engagement lest he should remember the flowers and be vexed with himself. Thankfully he saw her glad willingness to serve him, and if her finery moved him to any thought, it was that she might be giving up a coffee-party at some fellow-student's in order to do him a kindness. Perhaps he never even noticed it, for to him she was always fair.

"I will come," she said cheerily. "I suppose you are sitting like a shipwrecked mariner in a troubled sea of MS., and starving for something to eat."

His rooms were somewhat larger and better furnished than hers, but still redolent of forced economy, and her very first move was a somewhat contemptuous examination of his cupboard, containing a few of the necessities of life. For once he heard candid and unflattering comments on his larder, and her dainty sniff at the breakfast sausage was frankly suspicious.

"Pouf! I would at least kill my own cats, and have them fresh! There's nothing here fit for a Christian, much less a poet! Imagine a sonnet inspired by a 'bratwurst.' Have patience a moment." With

a silken rush and rustle she was in her own room again, ransacking it of dainty cakes and two fresh eggs.

With cunning deftness she smuggled the eggs into some hot strong coffee, and meekly obeying her imperious orders, he ate and drank, feeling already strengthened, while the tender strains of her violin stole refreshingly over his disturbed nerves and quieted them.

"Tell me your theme," she said, as with renewed hope he took up his pen, "and in my own way I will accompany you."

"I have named it 'The Sacrifice of Love.' See! much is already accomplished. But it goes not—somehow! Here is a *pastorale*, so stiff, so unliving, like a set theatre scene, and nothing of what is in my heart."

She held the violin more firmly, and let the bow fall quiveringly upon the strings.

"I see, you want the birds to sing, the leaves to rustle dreamily, the stream to babble brightly in the sunshine, before it goes to sleep in the quiet shadows of some enchanted lake. Listen then, and translate into words."

She touched the chords with power, and little by little the very breath of life stirred all his dumb creation. No longer doubtful or hesitating, with the mists cleared from his brain, he worked joyfully and with zest, happily conscious that under the stimulus of her music he was doing the best that was in him. For her, it was a rich reward to see the stress and strain of vain endeavour pass from his face, and watch the busy pen so seldom pausing or at a loss. Such a keen pleasure is the rarest that even a musician may know, but the darkening of the room warned her that she must soon leave him.

"Tell me!" she said, still playing softly that the spell might not be broken, "what is the sacrifice? What does she do?"

"Ach! It suits not me that the woman should sacrifice herself to the man. My story is otherwise told, yet even now I set it differently according to your music, which inspires me to do better than myself. I shall win the laurel crown—we shall win it together, and then the golden days shall no longer be waited for, they will be with us."

His burning enthusiasm found its true answer in her, and again the rich notes filled the darkening room. He had soon to light his lamp, and across her face, as she stood near the window, passed momentary flashes of illumination, accompanied by the swift roll of wheels. Some of the Grand-Duke's guests meant to go early and get good places. She played on patiently, until the very last moment that she could spare him, and then the notes dropped softly into silence like the ceasing of summer rain. She tried to slip unobserved from the room, but before she could do so the busy pen had stopped, and Carl sat like one wakened from a dream.

"Mein Fräulein! you will never leave me with your gracious work half done! Give me but this one evening, and I will pay it back with all my life! There is fame, honour, almost to my hand, but without

your help I have no power to write even one line. Herzliebste! I entreat of thee!"

He pleaded so confidently, never dreaming of all he was asking, yet as she listened she began to see that ambition was not the central figure in her picture after all. If it had been she would not have moved quietly and wordlessly back to her place again, where the flashing of passing lamps showed her face pale and set. She was breathless with sudden renunciation—giddy from the haste of resolve, and only conscious that already his success was dearer to her than her own. Would the cost be too great, if only the setting of her sun meant for him a new and happy dawning? She thought not, and so played on, with his warm thanks ringing in her ears, and stilling the tumult of crushed hopes, played with a perfect understanding of his theme, making him wonder and rejoice at her divining power.

"The streets are noisy to-night," he said to her gaily, "but that disturbs not us. To-morrow it is not poor little autumn violets that shall grace your *début*, but rare roses, white as your hand. When their sweetness greets you they will remind you of all I owe, and you will play the better, inspired by your own goodness."

She saw his mistake, letting it pass in silence; yet she was glad he had not forgotten her flowers, although they would be no longer needed. Her chances in Weinbergen were lost. True, the audience, with a long programme to enjoy, would never miss an unknown violin soloist, but the Directorate, who had strained a point of etiquette to admit a *débutante*, would shake off her ungrateful dust and leave her comfortless.

Some of the carriages were already returning, and the cathedral chimes had rung out the hour of ten, before Carl Brenner had finished his task, and translated it aloud, for his English was stronger than Kathleen's German, and to them both it seemed very good.

"We shall win," he repeated with that certainty which is sometimes prophetic; and then carried away by the joy of a well-completed task, and all the happy emotions which love, hope, and gratitude bring with them, he took her suddenly in his arms and kissed her. Impulsive as the action was, he meant nothing but what was reverential, tender, and thanksgiving. In his thoughts she was already his betrothed, held in highest honour and esteem, yet he had made a grave mistake. To her, it seemed as though he had desecrated the white altar on which she had laid her sacrifice, and a great revulsion of feeling against her own act and against him made her ungovernably angry, almost beside herself with scorn and self-reproach. She was Irish, with the faults and fineness of her race.

"How dare you! how dare you! Is it for this that I have?—I will tear your work in pieces!"

With reckless, unreasoning fury she seized the sheets of MS. He made one quick involuntary gesture, as though to rescue them from her, and then stood shamed and patient. If she chose to punish him

so, he would submit, and to an extent his forbearance conquered her, for she flung the MS. down again.

"I will not tear the living words,—they might cry out, but I hope you will fail! Do you hear?"

She was so fierce, that Carl, not understanding, and himself unnerved with the day's strain and toil, hardly knew how to deal with her or allay the storm he had raised.

"Mein Fräulein!" he began gently, "I have done what is wrong, but it is because I——"

But she would not hear him, being in that passion of heat and resentment which sees nothing but itself.

"I hope you will fail!" she repeated, and so left him.

But after a while he comforted himself. "She will forgive me. To-morrow's triumph will soften her heart, and she will understand all the joy and forgive. I have no fear—no fear at all!"

He went out then to calm himself down with the cool river breeze, and found the streets full of a joyous crowd, who were returning from the palace, where they had been cheering the illustrious guests as they came out from the concert. At first Carl gave no heed to them, but a few words overheard quickened his fears, and he asked a bystander what was the reason of so many people being about at that hour.

"There has been a grand concert at the palace. Nothing worse, and we have just been shouting ourselves hoarse for all the pretty women. You have missed something, I can tell you!"

"What! the concert *to-night*? Then there is one also to-morrow?"

"No, it is the parting festivity! The Grand-Duke goes early to-morrow to Berlin."

Carl went on dazed, and all the bright lights shining on the river turned dim in his sight.

"Ach Gott! the little Käslein! She has sacrificed herself for me, and I—Ach Gott!"

If only she had heard his passion of remorseful tenderness, her hurt would have been healed; but although he tried to see her the next day, he failed, and the day after that she left Weinbergen without his knowledge.

For six long years he searched vainly for her, and none could understand why Carl Brenner, the successful flattered poet—for the prize poem had made his name—always wrote sorrowfully, as one who had missed the best in life. But just then it was the fashion to be sad, and they suggested this as a possible reason for his melancholy.

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"Miss Haynes, will you play for us again?"

Kathleen rose promptly if a little wearily, because she was paid to entertain these people. For six years she had struggled on, neither failing nor succeeding, but just balancing between the two, earning enough to feed and clothe herself, but quite outside the real artistic circle.

The ring had opened once to let her in, but she had not seized the chance, and it had closed against her inexorably. Out of Weinbergen there had been none to lend a helping hand, and she had fought her way through the years, dropping in weariness many a bright hope and ambition, and leaving it by the wayside. She had laughed sometimes, remembering the girl so young and so silly making playfellows and confidants of the very pigeons; but she was not without consolations, for Carl Brenner's work was well known in England, and it had been her labour of love to go through every line, dictionary in hand, and rejoice that he at least had caught the tide at the flood. Her rancour had soon died of its own inanition, and what was good stayed with her.

The warm auburn had faded a little from her hair, and the discipline of life had tamed her into patience; but she touched the strings with all the old love and even greater power, only the last chord instead of being true was a trembling faint discord, for advancing towards her, and parting the careless throng as he came, was Carl Brenner. The entertainment had been given in his honour, and God had sent her there to meet him. His face was simply irradiated with the joy of finding her at last, and as he caught her hands the tears were in his eyes.

"Herzgeliebte! I have found you—after many days!"

And the crowd looked on in dumb amazement, dry as Gideon's fleece, whilst on the chosen two the richest dew of heaven descended. Yet the mere onlookers could not be all unmoved, for even to witness such happiness from afar off is a solemn thing. But to Carl, he and Kathleen were alone with their joy. He was conscious of nothing else in the world.

"Beloved! I have sought you everywhere. In Paris, in Munich—at Berlin, Leipsic—through all your native land. Never a written word of mine but it was a message seeking you through all the world. Ach! the little Käslein to be so cruel—so unforgiving. But now is all the sorrow and vain longing overpast. There remains to us only the joy of meeting, and thou art of me once again the great inspiration!"

In his impetuous tender hurry of words he waited for no answer, nor was there need of any. She saw that he had remained faithful, and for them both there was a new heaven and a new earth.

ELLEN A. SMITH.

AN UNCROWNED QUEEN

BY NOEL WILLIAMS

HER angelic face can bear no other name; one look suffices to bind your heart to her for ever." Such was the dictum pronounced by no less a person than Lamartine on Madame Récamier, without a doubt the most remarkable figure in Parisian society during the first four decades of the present century, the idol of Prince Augustus of Prussia, of Matthieu de Montmorency, of Benjamin Constant, and of René Chateaubriand; the bosom friend of Madame de Staël; the confidante of Murat, Bernadotte, and Moreau; about whose charms Lucien Bonaparte raved, and to whom Wellington made love in his bad French. Before the throne of this uncrowned queen of France kings and princes, statesmen and orators, authors and artists, warriors and diplomatists, bowed the knee, and she received their homage with that easy grace and gentle dignity which commanded at once their respect and their admiration.

Jeanne Françoise Julie Adélaïde Bernard—to write it in full, although she used only the third of her four Christian names—was born at Lyons on the 4th of December 1777. Her father, Jean Bernard, was a notary of that city, but beyond the fact that he was extremely good-looking, he does not appear to have been in any way distinguished. Her mother (whose maiden name was Manton), from whom Juliette inherited that bewitching loveliness and charm of manner which was to secure for her a European reputation, was a singularly beautiful and accomplished woman with an extraordinary aptitude for business, which enabled her to amass by successful speculation a nice little fortune, and, what according to Disraeli is far harder of accomplishment, to keep it.

In 1784 Jean Bernard was appointed a collector of customs in Paris, where he and his wife took up their residence, and their little daughter was placed in the convent of La Déserte at Lyons, in which community one of Madame Bernard's sisters was a nun. Juliette never forgot the days spent at the convent, and in after life was accustomed to ascribe the fact that, although constantly coming into contact with persons of such various opinions, she was always able to retain her religious belief, to the teaching which she then received.

When about ten years of age she joined her parents in Paris, where they were living in very good style, having a box at the Théâtre Français, and giving supper parties twice a week. Even at that early age she seems to have been remarkable for her beauty and grace, and

became the pet of La Harpe and other literary men who frequented the Bernards' house; and to this fact may be attributed her taste for literary society, to which she is in no small degree indebted for her lasting celebrity. Her mother, who seems to have attached an extraordinary importance to the power of personal attraction, compelled the poor child to spend many weary hours at her toilet-table, and allowed no opportunity to slip of exhibiting her little daughter's budding charms to the admiring eyes of the Parisians. At that time the unfortunate Louis XVI. was already the slave of his people, and was prepared to make almost any sacrifice to please his capricious subjects, and bolster up his tottering throne. The public were even admitted to the dining-room at Versailles, to stare at the royal family taking their meals with all the ceremonial of the ancient monarchy. On one occasion Madame Bernard and Juliette entered among the crowd, and Marie Antoinette was so struck with the child's beauty that after dinner she sent one of her ladies to her mother with a request that she would allow her daughter to go to the royal apartments, where she and the princess royal, both about the same age, were measured to see which was the taller.

Although Madame Bernard paid so much attention to her child's personal appearance, she by no means neglected her education, and indeed supervised her studies with the greatest care. Juliette had the advantage of studying under the best masters, and became an excellent musician and graceful dancer.

At the age of fifteen Juliette received an offer of marriage. Her suitor was a wealthy Paris banker named Jacques Récamier, a handsome pleasure-loving man of forty-three, generous to a fault, and at the same time, oddly enough, utterly without feeling. One day, we are told, he would lend a friend money almost to any amount; the next, if the same friend died, he would coolly murmur, "Another drawer shut," and straightway forget all about him. Juliette seems to have received M. Récamier's addresses without reluctance. She had known him for several years; he had always been exceedingly kind to her as a child, and she was indebted to him for many of her most costly toys and most gorgeously-attired dolls. She felt quite sure in her own mind that he would prove an equally indulgent husband, and so after a little hesitation she consented to become his wife. The banker on his part seems to have regarded the lovely child mainly in the light of a daughter, whose beauty refreshed his eyes, while the admiration it excited among his friends and neighbours flattered his vanity ("Il voulut par son mariage éblouir et éclipser le monde dans lequel il vivait," says Rondelet). Moreover the tie between them was never anything but a nominal one.

The wedding took place in April 1793: scarcely a time, one would have supposed, for marrying or giving in marriage. The Reign of Terror was at its height; all society was broken up and scattered to

the four winds of heaven, and all family ties annihilated. People saw their relatives and friends being dragged to the block, themselves living in hourly dread of a similar fate, and yet were too paralysed by fear to resist the tyranny of the executioners. Jacques Récamier used to go almost every day to the Place de la Concorde to watch the guillotine being fed with human prey beneath a gigantic statue of Liberty, as he said to accustom himself to the fate which he had every reason to expect would be his own, but more probably because such gruesome scenes had a peculiar fascination for him as they had for George Selwyn. He was present at the execution of the king; he saw the fair head of Marie Antoinette fall into the fatal basket, and nearly all the men with whom he had been intimate in politics or business guillotined one after the other; but he himself, his wife, and her family were spared, chiefly it is believed through the influence of Barrière, one of the leaders of the Terrorists who was a great friend of the Bernards. Jean Bernard, it may be remarked, was probably the only *receveur des finances* of Louis XVI. who escaped the guillotine.

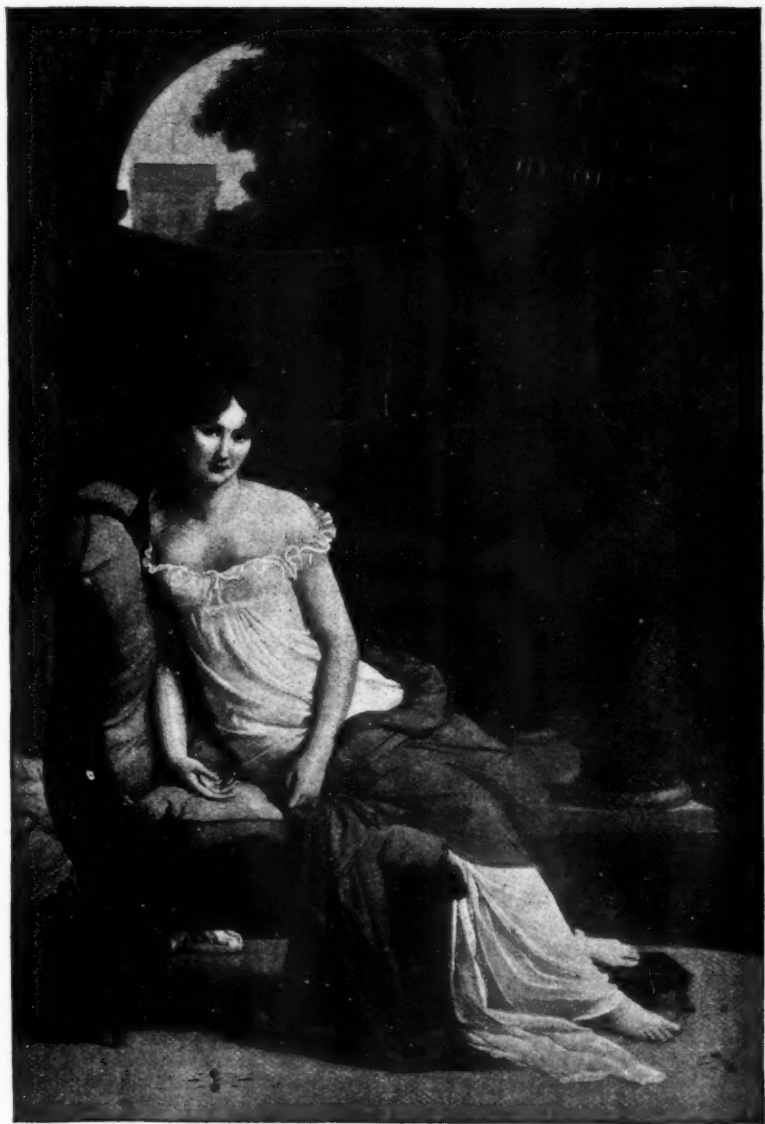
The first four years of Juliette's married life were therefore of necessity spent in comparative seclusion, during which her beauty fully developed, and she passed from childhood into all the splendour of youth. The following description, from the pen of Madame Lenormant, of her appearance at this time, does not seem, even after making all due allowance for the fact that the writer was both her niece and most enthusiastic admirer, to be in any way an exaggerated one:—

"A figure flexible and elegant; a well-poised head; throat and shoulders of admirable form and proportions; beautiful arms though somewhat small; a little rosy mouth; black hair that curled naturally; a delicate and regular nose, but *bien-français*; an incomparable brilliancy of complexion; a frank arch face, rendered irresistibly lovely from its expression of goodness; a carriage slightly indicative of both indolence and pride, so that to her might be applied St. Simon's compliment to the Duchess of Burgundy—

'Her step was like that of a goddess on clouds.'

Such was Madame Récamier at eighteen. After the Terror was over, in the day of order and reconstruction, Madame Récamier soon became a notable figure in the somewhat mixed society which had taken the place of the old aristocracy, and was throwing itself with a zest sharpened by the privations of terror, war, and famine, into a vortex of pleasure. Her presence at any of its gatherings was looked upon as an event of no small importance, and wherever she went her loveliness called forth murmurs of curiosity and admiration. Among the earliest to pay tribute to her charms were Napoleon Bonaparte himself and his brother Lucien.

The friendship of Lucien Bonaparte was a privilege with which Madame Récamier could very well have dispensed. He began by



MADAME RÉCAMIER.

(From the portrait by Gérard.)

bombarding her with a series of *billets-doux*, couched in the most grandiloquent language, assuming the name of Romeo because hers was Juliette. He must have felt extremely foolish when the object of his devotion handed him back his first love-letter in the presence of a number of mutual friends, praising the talents of the writer, but advising him not to waste in "works of imagination" the time which he might more profitably devote to politics. However he was not the man to be discouraged by the want of success which had attended his romantic epistles, and so abandoning his *nom-de-guerre*, he wrote Madame Récamier letters the purport of which she could not pretend to misunderstand. These she showed to her husband and proposed to forbid Lucien the house. But Récamier represented to her that to quarrel openly with the brother of General Bonaparte would undoubtedly compromise him, and probably jeopardise his business, and advised her not to repulse Romeo too harshly. So for her husband's sake she bore with more or less patience the importunities of the infatuated young man, meeting his most impassioned declarations with peals of merry laughter, but was nevertheless greatly relieved when tired of so unsuccessful a pursuit his ardour cooled, and at length becoming conscious of the ridiculous part he was playing, he left her in peace. So months later he sent his friend M. Sapey to obtain his letters from Madame Récamier; but that lady very wisely declined to give them up in spite of entreaties and even threats; and Madame Lenormant tells us that she in her turn preserved them "as indisputable proofs of her (Madame Récamier's) virtue."

Jacques Récamier's position as a wealthy banker gave him in those days a position which he could not have occupied under the ancient monarchy, and his wife's renown as a beauty, and the fact that her salon was regarded as a sort of neutral ground where all parties might meet, added to the popularity of the house, and their hotel in the Chaussée d'Antin, then the Rue du Mont Blanc, in the furnishing of which Berthaut the architect had been allowed *carte-blanche*, became the rendezvous for all that was most distinguished in political, artistic, and literary circles. Thither came Eugène Beauharnais and Fouché, Adrien and Matthieu de Montmorency, Murat, Bernadotte, Masséna, and Moreau, Camille Jourdan and Narbonne, La Harpe, Legouvé, and Emmanuel Dupathey, and last, but by no means least, Madame de Staël. A business transaction, the purchase of this very house in the Rue du Mont Blanc, which had formerly belonged to Necker, Madame de Staël's father, was the means of bringing these two celebrated women together, and was the beginning of a friendship which lasted until the death of the talented authoress of *Corinne* and *De L'Allemagne*, who seems to have been completely fascinated by this fresh young beauty, whose attractions differed so greatly from her own. Madame Récamier has left us some interesting memoranda of this meeting, which took place at the Récamiers' country house at Clichy. "I was struck with the beauty of her eyes and her expression. . . . She both attracted

and intimidated me. I felt at once her superiority and her genuineness. As for her she fixed her large eyes upon me, but with a friendly scrutiny, and paid me some personal compliments that would have been too exaggerated and direct had they not seemed to escape her unconsciously, thus giving them an irresistible fascination. . . . This interview was but a passing one, but it made a deep impression upon me. I only thought of Madame de Staël, so much did I feel the influence of that strong and ardent nature."

In 1800 Madame Récamier sat for her portrait to the famous painter David. The sketch he made, which depicts the young beauty reclining on a couch with her head turned towards the onlooker, is a very pleasing one, but was thought by many scarcely to do her justice, and David himself, it seems, was not wholly satisfied with it. It is, however, full of interest as an example of the style of the leader of the French school of this period. A far better known portrait is the celebrated full-length one by Gérard, which is generally admitted to be one of the most beautiful creations of that talented artist. The painter was so pestered by people coming to his studio to see it that he threatened to destroy it if another came, and being a man of a most ungovernable temper, it is more than probable that he would have really done so had his friends not taken him at his word.

It was during this same year 1800 that Madame Récamier's father, Jean Bernard, was appointed Postmaster-General, of which office, however, he was deprived in 1802, on a charge of countenancing a secret Royalist correspondence which had been circulating in the south of France. He was arrested, and thrown into prison, and it might have gone hardly with him but for the timely intercession of Bernadotte (afterwards King of Sweden), who henceforth became one of Madame Récamier's most intimate friends.

The first eight years of the nineteenth century may be regarded as the period of Madame Récamier's reign as queen of Parisian society. Her husband's banking house had now become one of the wealthiest in France, and she had only to express a wish to see it immediately gratified, so that at their country seat at Clichy, and at their house in the Rue du Mont Blanc, she was enabled to entertain in regal style all the most distinguished people in Paris. Juliette was now in the zenith of her beauty and popularity. She was by this time entirely free from the bashfulness from which she had suffered when she first appeared in society, and her manners were charming, while she seems to have been as good as she was beautiful. It is true that, according to our English ideas at any rate, she must have been a desperate flirt, though this does not seem to have arisen so much from any excessive love of admiration as from a desire to be loved by her friends—a desire not unnatural in a woman married to a man old enough to be her father, and engrossed in the management of his business. She certainly does not seem to have been so indifferent to the many distinguished men who laid their hearts at her feet, as she had proved

herself to the advances of Lucien Bonaparte: but on the other hand it has not been suggested—by any one, that is to say, whose opinion carries any weight—that she ever exceeded the bounds of harmless flirtation. Indeed we have a striking testimony to her virtue from a contemporary who was certainly by no means over-eager to credit any woman with that quality, Charles James Fox, who pronounced her to be “the only woman who united the attractions of pleasure to those of modesty.” She was undoubtedly, however, too careless of her reputation, and occasionally admitted people to her friendship who were quite unworthy of it, as a natural consequence of which some of her most innocent flirtations have been construed into intrigues.

Unfortunately for Madame Récamier, there was one person who regarded the popularity of her receptions with no friendly eye. This was Bonaparte, who had established himself at the Tuileries, where he lived in a splendour which bade fair to rival that of the ancient régime, while his family affected something of the dignity of royalty. He had wished to attach the new beauty to his court, but Madame Récamier, who valued her independence, had refused, and as Bonaparte could not bear the idea of a society which did not derive all its *éclat* from him, he actually seems in time to have come to regard her with the hatred of a rival. Moreover he was fully alive to the fact that the salons of Paris were distinctly hostile to his government, and that at receptions like those of Madame Récamier and Madame de Staël, his ambitious schemes were wont to be discussed, and treated with scant respect. He could not of course prevent this except by resorting to extreme measures, and these he finally took. In 1803 Madame de Staël, of whose intellectual powers he seems to have been as jealous as Louis XIV. was of those of Madame de Sévigné, was banished from Paris, and forbidden to approach within forty leagues of the capital; and five years later, after the publication of her book *De L'Allemagne*, she was expelled from France altogether.

In his dealings with the first beauty in France, Napoleon showed himself as harsh and tyrannical as he had been to the first wit. He made another attempt to undermine Madame Récamier's social influence, and to this end commissioned the astute Fouché to offer her the post of a *dame du palais*, the acceptance of which would of course have necessitated the closing of her salon, but the honour was respectfully yet firmly declined. Madame Récamier was soon to learn what this refusal should cost her. In 1806 her husband's banking house became involved in a series of misfortunes, brought about by the financial panic in Spain. A comparatively small sum—a million francs (£40,000)—would have enabled him to tide over his difficulties, but when he applied to the Bank of France for a loan to this amount, notwithstanding the fact that he had ample security to offer, and the bank had lately shown itself desirous of doing everything in its power to re-establish public credit, his application was instantly and harshly refused. The consequence was that Récamier's

bank was compelled to close its doors, and Juliette and her husband found themselves suddenly reduced from affluence to comparative poverty. There can be little doubt that Bonaparte, who manipulated banks and bourses as readily as he did armies and navies, was responsible for this otherwise unaccountable action on the part of the authorities of the Bank of France.

Madame Récamier, aware that she herself was indirectly the cause of her husband's failure, bore this reversal of fortune without a murmur. The house in the Rue du Mont Blanc and the château at Clichy were immediately put up for sale, and while her husband voluntarily resigned all his personal possessions to his creditors, she disposed of her jewellery to the very last trinket. The sympathy felt for her was universal ("It could not have been greater if she had been the widow of a marshal of France slain on the field of battle," Bonaparte angrily remarked), and she became if possible an even greater object of admiration than she had been in the days of her prosperity. Unfortunately money made all the difference, and without money, Madame Récamier, although she might retain her friends, could no longer continue to lead society.

(To be continued.)

OXFORD AND HER COLLEGES

IV. ORIEL

By AUSTIN MEADE

THE undergraduate who, during "Eights' Week" or "Commem," introduces relations or friends to the glories of his University, can always be sure of an outburst of enthusiastic comment when he ushers them through the gateway of Oriel. It is only one, however, among the many sights of equal beauty which make a deep impression on those who visit the colleges of Oxford for the first time. Certain views of Magdalen, certain reaches of the "Cher," the garden-front of St. John's, the Chapel, Hall, and gardens of New College—to take only a few instances of Oxford's chief natural and architectural splendours—always claim delightful recognition. But the glimpse of Oriel as one enters the quadrangle is, if equalled, at least unsurpassed in simple dignity and beauty. The portico of grey and crumbling stone, half lost amid a wealth of clinging greenery and blossom, and the old steps leading to the Hall, adorned on either side with pots of brightly-coloured flowers, once seen, engrave themselves for ever on the memory.

But if Oriel is rich in outward beauty of form and colouring, it is richer still in the associations of a glorious past, whose spirit has long breathed, and breathes to-day, far beyond the narrow limits of either College or University. For who can think of the great religious revival of the present century without the names of Newman, Keble, Pusey, Wilberforce, and Froude—all Fellows of Oriel—crowding on the mind? Standing within the gateway of the College, admiring its present beauty and musing on its past, one feels that the ground is almost holy, consecrated by the earnest, simple lives of so many of its sons. And one's eyes wander with one's thoughts towards the window of the room in which one or other whose influence we have felt has lived and worked; or seek for the most historic of Oxford Common-rooms, where those whose names we reverence so often met together to discuss the burning questions of the day.

But Oriel, apart from the prestige of having held the first place among the colleges of Oxford, can also claim respect as one of the oldest homes of learning in the oldest of English Universities. The College was founded in 1324, less than a hundred years after the first migration of scholars from the more ancient University of Paris had made Oxford the chief centre of learning in this country. The founder, Adam le Brome, who was almoner to King Edward II. and rector of St. Mary's Church, dedicated his college to the Virgin, and for a long time it was

always mentioned in official documents as the College of St. Mary. Its present name came into common use very early in its history, and was derived from a piece of land called "La Oriole," which was granted by King Edward III. to the infant community, and which forms part of its present site. The fact of the founder having been rector of St. Mary's accounts for the close connection which has existed almost from the first between Oriel and the most famous of Oxford churches, and St. Mary Hall, which was originally its parsonage house. For Adam le Brome had early sought and obtained from his royal patron permission



ORIEL COLLEGE: THE QUADRANGLE.

to transfer his church, with its revenues, which of course included the parsonage, to the use of his new foundation. But the Church of St. Mary's, as its more usual title of "the 'Varsity Church" implies, never became a mere College living, and has always played a great and prominent part in the history of Oxford, and its old Gothic spire has looked down on many a strange sight not usually associated with the repose and learning befitting a university. St. Mary Hall, thus closely united in its origin to Oriel, gained, as time went on, a certain measure of independence; and at one period at least in its history, could number a larger membership than the College which claimed it as an appendage, and into which it has recently been merged. It has

educated, among others, Sir Thomas More, whose figure stands out as one of the few really great and good men who held high office during the Tudor period; and Cardinal Allen, the most famous of the English Churchmen who repudiated the Elizabethan settlement, besides in our own day having given to the Church of England the fearless and saintly missionary, Bishop Hannington, martyred near the Lake Victoria Nyanza in 1885. One of its principals too, a Dr. King, who, in accordance with the usual custom, had been chosen from among the Fellows of Oriel, and to whom there is a curious monument in the little chapel, won fame as one of the most uncompromising Jacobites of the last century, though the statement that "he was one of the last adherents of the Stuarts at Oxford" will be indignantly repudiated by some whose College days do not yet belong to a very distant past.

The years which followed the founding of Oriel were troublous times for England, and the civil strife and strong party feeling which divided the country at large spread their baneful influence to the inner life of the Colleges, and infected the townsmen, who watched with ever-growing jealousy the little communities of scholars which were growing up in their midst. Among the scholars too the bitterness of feeling which divided the Northerners and Southerners was a fruitful source of violence and disorder, though in a time of almost perpetual war with Scotland such enmity was hardly to be wondered at. Oriel, which came into existence only ten years after the battle of Bannockburn, had again placed the Northern kingdom on terms of nominal equality with her powerful neighbour, was long identified with the Northern party; while Merton, standing at a stone's throw from its gates, being a stronghold of the Southerners, was a constant menace to the peace. On one occasion a Provost of Oriel, the candidate of the Northerners for the Chancellorship of the University, was, while attending divine service at St. Mary's, suddenly attacked by a band of armed men, led by his rival from Merton; and so serious did the animosity between the two parties become, that the king appointed a Commission to inquire into the causes of dispute.

It is comforting to know, however, that brawling in church between Heads of Houses was not of frequent occurrence, and that open hostility between the two parties in the University tended to die out, though this seems to have been chiefly owing to the imperative need of presenting a strong and united front to a common enemy who, in the shape of the Oxford townsman, had during this period of domestic strife grown over-bold and menacing. Conflicts between "town and gown" seem to have been as old as the University itself, and certain recent events make it doubtful whether the unfriendly spirit they engendered has even yet completely disappeared. That the citizens should have felt enmity towards these growing corporations, who, relying on royal and ecclesiastical favour, claimed the liberties and privileges which were denied to themselves, was only natural; and that the students could on occasion conduct themselves in a

high-handed and vexatious manner will be seen from an incident which was responsible for a most disastrous outbreak between the two rival factions.

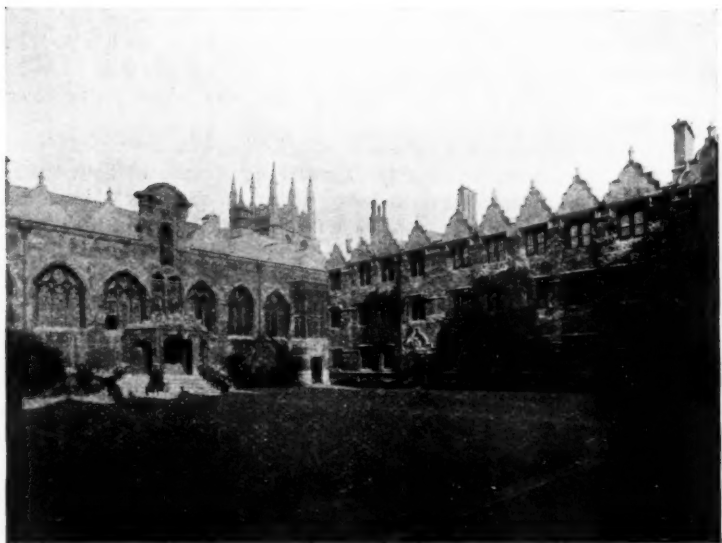
One February afternoon, in the year 1354, a number of scholars had entered a tavern in Carfax, known in later times as the "Mermaid," and being ill-content with the quality of the wine, they summoned the vintner and bade him change it. To this he seems to have demurred, so they "for his saucy language, broke his head with the flagon." Some townsmen, attracted by the cries of the outraged publican, at once rushed to his assistance; and the scholars with great difficulty effected their escape, running with all speed down the High Street to St. Mary's, where they took refuge from their pursuers, while from the spire the bells rang out to summon their comrades to their aid. In the meantime an answering peal from St. Martin's tower had brought together large numbers of armed townsmen, who began an advance in the direction of the Colleges.

During the hours which followed, attacks and counter-attacks of a most determined and bloodthirsty character were made by both sides, and the fighting, which seems to have centred in the near neighbourhood of St. Mary's Church, continued throughout the night with most disastrous results for the scholars, who were largely outnumbered, and probably worse armed than their opponents. Certain it is that a large number of the combatants on the University side were killed; while no record exists of deaths among the townsmen. Tradition says, however, that when the struggle was at its height, the Mayor of Oxford himself was captured by a party of scholars, and being hurried off to Oriel, was there hanged in the College Hall; and though relics form as a rule but a poor basis for an argument, a piece of rope attached to a beam was pointed to, long years afterwards, in confirmation of the story. But whether this act of summary justice did actually take place or not, the credence it obtained even centuries later clearly implies that Oriel men took an active and leading part in the conflict.

The immediate result was a great accession of powers to the University, and the town was proportionately weakened, many of its most cherished liberties being abolished by the King's Commissioners. The ecclesiastical authorities, too, drew from the armoury of the Church every weapon that could be used to punish the bloodthirsty violence of the citizens. The town was mulcted in a large sum, which was to be spent on masses for the souls of the slain, and was laid under an interdict from which it had great difficulty in freeing itself, even after every possible satisfaction had been made. The Mayor and Corporation, moreover, were ordered to attend the Church of St. Mary once every year, when with ropes round their necks they were to recite a litany, and make a substantial offering to mark their sorrow for the brutal massacre. It is interesting as an illustration of Oxford's great reverence for the past, and her consequent desire to retain old customs,

that this annual ceremony continued in practice until quite recent times, and was only abolished six years before Newman became Vicar of St. Mary's. It is fair to add that the humiliation to the civic dignitaries of appearing publicly in halts had been long dispensed with; and that the undergraduates, who attended in their special gallery to watch the ceremony, were restrained from jeering at the penitents under pain of severe penalties.

It must not, however, be thought that the life of the Oxford scholar during these early days of the University was passed either in drinking or rioting, as the foregoing story might suggest. In reality it was a



ORIEL QUAD : SHOWING ROOMS OF NEWMAN AND KEBLE.

life of great hardship such as would little commend itself to the Oxford of to-day.

The Oriel undergraduate of the fourteenth century would have to attend his first lecture at the hour of six in the morning, and he was supposed to rise not later than five; though doubtless in times when the use of water was regarded as somewhat frivolous, a considerable margin for sleep could have been safely indulged in. Dinner was served at ten in the morning, and supper at five in the afternoon. Breakfast seems to have been dispensed with altogether until the sixteenth century, when men were allowed to take a piece of bread and a pot of beer in the College buttery, or to carry it to their rooms; in which latter practice we find the first trace of the very elaborate meal which is nowadays

regarded by many undergraduates as a fitting preparation for their morning's lectures. The men appear to have worked chiefly in the Hall, where they also dined and supped. At one end stood a basin, which probably served for the ablutions of the whole College; and in the middle a fire burned during the winter months, an opening in the roof affording an escape for the smoke. Candles being very dear, costing about two shillings a pound of our money, late hours were strictly forbidden. No one was allowed to be out in the evening after nine o'clock, and as the key was taken to the Provost's room at that hour, no way of



ORIEL FRONT FROM CANTERBURY GATE.

escaping detection was possible to the belated wanderer; unless indeed the formidable rows of spikes which now surmount the walls of the Colleges, and which cause so much inconvenience to undergraduates, belong to a later period. Possibly these Newgate-like decorations belong, so far as Oriel is concerned, to the sixteenth century, and perhaps it was to save the Provost from the constant disturbance of his rest, consequent on the stoppage of the old means of ingress, that one of the Fellows, who died in 1599, left a dwelling-house and land in St. Giles' parish for the purpose of maintaining one poor scholar from Worcestershire, whose duty it should be to act as "publick porter," and to open and

shut the College gates. The "Scout"—the modern Oxford servant, who differs so completely from any other kind of servant ever seen or imagined—seems to date from comparatively modern times; and in the old days most of the menial work must have been performed by the scholars themselves, though the presence of a barber on the premises, which we find from the earliest times, was at once a luxury and a convenience that has unfortunately been allowed to disappear.

That these conditions continued much the same during a long period is seen from a description of College life at Oxford, which occurs in a sermon preached at St. Paul's Cross in 1551. The scholars, it says, rise at four or five in the morning, and after service in Chapel, attend lectures till ten, when they partake of a very frugal dinner—"content with a penny piece of beef between four, having a pottage made of the same beef with salt and oatmeal, and nothing else. After the dinner," continues the description, "they are reading or learning till five in the evening, when they have a supper not better than their dinner, immediately after which they go to reasoning in problems or to some other study till nine or ten; and then being without fire are fain to walk or run up and down for half-an-hour to get a heat in the feet, when they go to bed."

Side by side with this simplicity of life, Oxford in early times was remarkable for a spirit of sturdy independence and for originality in the fields of thought. Boswell describes her in the last century as "that magnificent and venerable seat of Learning, Orthodoxy, and Toryism." Early in the fifteenth century Archbishop Courtenay had referred to her as "a University of Heresies." And in the main both were right. In the eighteenth century the classics were read and known, so that Oxford might, in an ordinary but rather narrow sense of the word, claim to be learned. And the dull, dead-level uniformity in religious matters, the lack of interest in doctrine, the indolent acquiescence in whatever was prescribed "by lawful authority"—what was this but the height and perfection of Orthodoxy? As for Toryism, which was then generally synonymous with devotion to the exiled House of Stuart, let the University "Black Book" testify: "Let Mr. Meadowcourt of Merton College," so runs the entry, "be kept back from the degree for which he next stands, for the space of two years; nor be admitted to supplicate for his grace, until he confesses his manifold crimes, and asks pardon on his knees." The manifold crimes consisted of somewhat pronounced sentiments of loyalty to King George, who, in spite of his shortcomings, was England's reigning sovereign. And Lord Chesterfield's witness in a letter written in 1749, that "Oxford would not be known if it were not for the treasonable spirit publicly avowed and often exerted there," puts the Toryism beyond a doubt.

During the closing years of the fourteenth and the early part of the fifteenth century the condition of Oxford was one of ferment and unrest. Such views as are associated with the name of Wycliffe were rife in the Colleges. Outspoken criticism of abuses whether in Church

or State, and fearless questionings in regions where men had hitherto been content to be led blindfold, were freely indulged in. The



ORIEL COLLEGE: DINING HALL.

authorities, both ecclesiastical and civil, became alarmed. The Archbishop of Canterbury, with great difficulty, persuaded the University to appoint twelve examiners to search Wycliffe's writings, and

to extract from them all conclusions which deserved condemnation. The examination was duly made; but the Archbishop found that the doctrines which were declared erroneous continued to be openly professed, and he decided to visit the University in person, and restore it to a proper state of discipline.

The Chancellor and Proctors, however, refused him admittance, and the enraged prelate laid the University under an interdict. This extreme step seems, however, to have somewhat failed in its effect, and in defiance of it John Byrche the Proctor, a Fellow of Oriel, accompanied by William Symon of the same College, went to St. Mary's, where they broke open the doors, rang the bells, and celebrated mass. The Dean of Oriel, John Rote, instead of condemning these enormities, in Hall and in the presence of the Fellows, questioned the action of the Church authorities in the strongest terms. "Are we," he demanded, "to be punished with an interdict on our church for other people's misdoings? Truly it shall be said of the Archbishop, 'The Devil go with him and break his neck.'" To which pious wish he had dared to add threats, saying, "The Archbishop would better take care what he is about."

Finally, however, the University, standing alone against King and Church, was compelled to submit, though a year elapsed before order could be completely restored. One of the first steps taken was an inquiry into the state of Oriel, which had been throughout the chief centre of resistance; and several of the Fellows were accused of serious offences. William Symon, Robert Dykes, and Thomas Wilton were charged with breaking the peace and fomenting discord, also with "frequenting taverns," and coming into College as late as ten, eleven, or even twelve at night, and when they found the gate closed, with climbing in over the wall. The further accusation was brought against Wilton that he had on one occasion knocked up the Head of the College at 10 P.M., had called him a liar, and challenged him to fight. But the faults alleged were probably less blameworthy than they would at first sight appear.

In the Colleges of that date, where the life centred in the Hall, and where separate rooms were unknown, privacy of any kind was almost impossible; and men may have often found the free discussion of the new religious or social doctrines of the Wycliffites or Lollards very difficult in the presence of juniors, whose ignorance might misinterpret what was said, or before the College authorities, who, even when in sympathy, might not dare to countenance forbidden views. The taverns therefore probably formed the debating clubs and news-rooms of the period, and the knowledge that the walls formed an easy means of ingress to the College would be an inducement to disregard the lateness of the hour. As for Wilton's seemingly shocking behaviour towards the Provost, it must be remembered that the aspect of an accusation is often strangely altered when the defendant's version has been heard. The result of the inquiry, too, proves either that the

offences of the Fellows were not considered to deserve punishment, or that the number of the disaffected was too great to render its infliction possible. And even the Dean, who had been so very outspoken in his views on the Archbishop, was left in undisturbed possession of his dignity.

But Lollardry from this time began to wane. The real or supposed connection between the new doctrines and Wat Tyler's insurrection had already done much to discredit them; and the victorious campaigns of Henry V. in France, in awakening the warlike instincts of the nation and its thirst for military glory, had the effect, whether good or bad, of calling away men's attention from their own grievances and the actions of their rulers. The last trace of Lollardism, so far as Oriel is concerned, is to be found in the purchase of Wycliffe's writings by some of the Fellows in the year 1454.

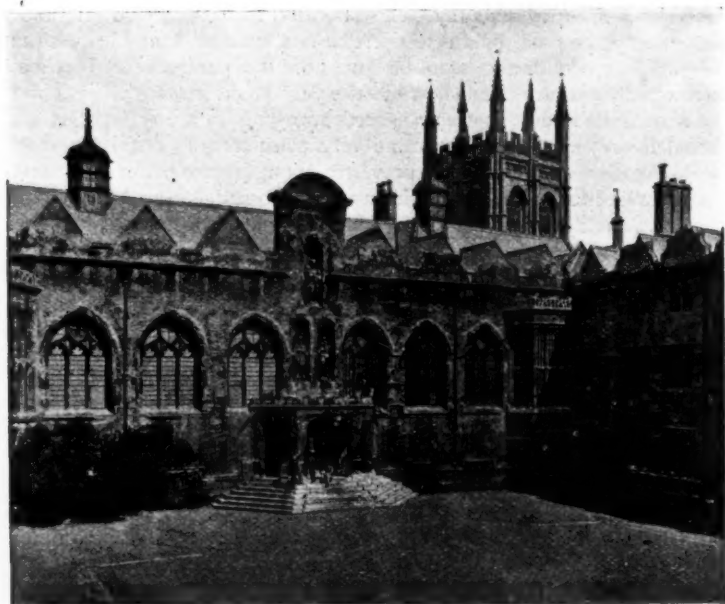
During the century that succeeded, owing to many legacies and benefactions, the College became very prosperous. But it is much to be feared that this did not prove to be an altogether unmixed blessing; for indications exist which suggest a corresponding laxity of discipline. In 1531 the Bishop of Lincoln, under whose jurisdiction the College then was, found it necessary to admonish the Provost to attend more diligently to his duties, and five years later interference was again seriously needed. This time it was the conduct of one of the Fellows that called for reprimand. The Bishop's injunctions accuse him of blasphemy and profane swearing, and of having let his beard grow, besides having compromised the gravity of his position by wearing shirts and boots of the latest fashion. Unfortunately nothing is known as to whether the excommunication and loss of Fellowship with which he was threatened were enough to make him abandon his scandalous and frivolous behaviour.

The doctrinal changes of the Reformation seem to have met with little opposition from the University, though it is gratifying to find a member of Oriel, Edward Powell, maintaining, in the face of Royal tyranny, the old traditions of his College for courage and independence. He had been, when at Oxford, the chief defender of Orthodoxy in the University against the errors of Luther, and had thus gained the favour of the monarch whose labours in the same direction had won for him from the Pope the title of "Defender of the Faith." He became later a Canon of Salisbury, and at the time of the Divorce was one of Katharine of Arragon's ablest advocates. When called upon to accept the Royal Supremacy "in matters ecclesiastical," and to take the oath of Succession, he emphatically refused; and was in consequence hanged, drawn, and quartered at Smithfield.

But though the Reformation settlement was readily accepted, it was answerable for many changes in the ordinary life and customs of the Colleges. The growing importance which began to be attached to a good education by both nobles and gentry, brought to the University many men of greater wealth and position than formerly; and their

presence rendered necessary certain modifications of the old methods, which were largely founded on monastic models. The transition from mediæval to modern Oxford was very rapid; and after reading of the hardships to which Fellows and scholars had to submit, as late as the reign of Edward VI., it is difficult to realise that, less than a century later, the University should have been considered, after London, the most suitable centre for a Royal Court.

The old customs had not long passed away before the old buildings of Oriel also disappeared; and the College, as we know it to-day, dates



ORIEL QUAD AND MERTON TOWER.

from the seventeenth century. Its whole history, in brief, is summed up in the figures above the portico. The Virgin and Child remind the visitor that this is the old College of St. Mary; while the stone effigies of Edward II. and Charles I. proclaim the periods of its origin and restoration.

Hardly had the new quadrangle been completed when the Civil War broke out, and Oxford had the misfortune to become the recognised headquarters of the Royalists. During the years which followed, Oriel, in common with the rest of the Colleges, suffered severely; and like them was greatly impoverished by its continual contributions to the king's treasury. On the definite defeat of the Royalists, a Parliamen-

tary visitation of the University was ordered. But Oxford, although the town was held by the rebel troops, was true in its devotion to lost causes, and drew down upon itself the full measure of the Parliament's wrath, by passing in its Convocation a resolution against the Covenant, which was, according to Clarendon, "unanswerable."

The attempted answer of the Visitors, however, was a "wild and barbarous depopulation" of the Colleges; or in other words, the expulsion from the University of all those who openly avowed themselves to be Royalists. It was perhaps owing to Prynne, the great Puritan and a past member of the College, that Oriel was treated by the Visitors with exceptional leniency, and that only five of the Fellows were removed. The men appointed by the Parliament to fill the vacancies in the "depopulated" Colleges seem to have been well and carefully chosen, as even Clarendon admits that Charles II. on his restoration "found the University abounding in excellent learning."

But if his verdict was true in 1660, it unfortunately soon ceased to be so, for during the next hundred and thirty years Oxford sunk into a state of mental and moral lethargy. Gibbon, looking back over his past, declared the months he had spent there "were the most idle and unprofitable in his whole life." And Adam Smith is still more emphatic. "In the University of Oxford," he said, "the greater part of the public professors have for these many years given up altogether the practice of teaching." While Bishop Butler, who, with the exception perhaps of Gilbert White of Selborne, is the best known among Oriel men of the last century, had serious thoughts of migrating to Cambridge, owing to "the frivolous lectures and unintelligible disputations." Gilbert White probably never attempted a criticism, as his life was an excellent example of some of the abuses of the period. A Fellow of the College for fifty years, he only resided during twelve months of that time at Oxford, and held a college living, without the least thought of residence, for thirty-six years, while he passed his whole time enjoying the society of birds and reptiles on his property at Selborne.

But the dawn of a better time for Oxford was approaching; and the great intellectual revival which marked the opening of the century is in no small measure due to a step which Oriel then took. The College threw open its Fellowships to the free competition of the University, and by this means attracted to itself the greatest scholars of the time, and thus secured a first position in the academic world. One of the earliest Fellows to be so elected was Thomas Arnold, who afterwards as Headmaster of Rugby did so much for the improvement of Public School life in England. But the chief interest of the period centres round the group of scholars whose names are world-famed, and whose work was epoch-making in the religious history of this country. Although the time has not yet come to describe a movement which shows as yet no sign of having spent its forces, and whose future it is impossible to foresee, men of varying creeds watch its developments with interest and hope, believing that

from work so well begun, and so faithfully continued, good results alone are possible. For whatever may be the future of Oriel, the fair fame of a College so closely identified with the greatest religious revival of modern times will be jealously guarded so long as the names of Newman, Pusey, Keble, and so many others of her sons are honoured and remembered.

TO ONE LOVED

LIGHT without pause or limitude of light
 A sense of stars
 Drowned in the surging ocean of the night
 Beyond our sight
 That distance bars—
 A sense of stars.

And wingèd sweetness, without sound or sting.
 A sense of blooms
 Adrift upon the ripples of the spring.
 Where eddies ring
 In shadowy glooms—
 A sense of blooms.

O Love, that sets above life's rains and dooms
 A sense of stars,
 That wins from out the tangles of life's looms
 A thread of blooms
 No winter mars—
 O Love, in thy dear sight
 I know the light;
 O Love, to thee I cling
 And touch the spring.

ETHEL WHEELER.

THE SECRET OF THE FOSS

HE was the new *Engelishmaend*, arriving to fish the river. Aslag knew him for such directly she boarded the steamer, and saw his long knickerbockered, heathered-mixed-stockinged legs pacing the deck amidst a heterogeneous mass of gladstones, rod-cases, rugs, and fishing-basket belongings.

The steamer, having shipped a few barrels of salted fish and Aslag, black-gowned and kerchiefed, with her quaintly-painted and poker-worked wooden trunk for sole baggage, turned abruptly round the corner of the dark precipice and made up the fiord.

Trippers, passing by in the big ocean-liners, huge floating hotels, borne up the great arm of the sea towards famous cariole route, foss, fell, or glacier, hardly notice the entrance to the fiord. To them it is but one more of a thousand such tortuous gulfs with which countless ages of Atlantic breakers have scarred the coast of Norway. Only once a fortnight does the little steamer glide in between the sheer black cliffs, the bare deep-purple mountains, which hide the sun so early even on June afternoons, and, bringing in mails and cargo, carry off a few barrels of salt fish, the sole export of the fiord.

The advent of the steamer caused a passing excitement in the monotonous hard life on the lofty *sætlers* perched here and there among the green patches of pasture which dot the mountain-side, and among the red-tiled farmhouses lying on the scraps of low, rocky shore at their feet. When its shriek re-echoed among the dark cliffs, a rough boat, viking-galley shaped, either end a prow, was pushed alongside by an old red-nightcapped man, and into it Crawford and his sundry and various belongings were put over the side.

To him followed Aslag, with her quaint trunk and her few purchases of necessities and comfort from the nearest approach to a town, her yellow hair and her sweet smile.

Then the steamer went round and off again. On the pasture oases on the mountain-side, men and girls hanging out the rank green grass bundles to dry, hardly paused at the hay-harvest. Far above the fiord, cowbells, invisible, tinkled, their owners mere white specks moving among the scrub. Down below, in the little square patches of pale yellow rye or barley, the stooks were piled, the fields looking as if they bore a crop of sere and gaunt hop-poles. Life went on again up the fiord as if the outer world were not, as the sun sank behind the mountain wall and the chill evening breeze stirred the already gloomy water.

But was it ever the same again for Aslag, after she had sat with the

Engelishmaend in the stern of the boat, while he learnt his first few words of Norse from the first pretty Norwegian girl.

They landed at the little stage worn with the tear of the river, here rushing into the fiord. A low hay-trolley, temporarily released from harvest-work and drawn by a dun mare with a black zebra-like stripe down her back, attended by a frolicking cream-coloured foal, and harnessed with the least possible amount of rope harness, but marvellously sound, docile, sure-footed and industrious, here awaited Crawford's effects. To them were added Aslag's quaint trunk and parcels. Himself he retained by his side as a pleasing guide.

They passed the stores, the local emporium for every commodity from babies' caps to horse-shoes; the baker's, with its yellow-painted giant twist of bread hanging over the door; up the valley they went, across the river, over the crazy, creaking plank bridge, and so up to the white-faced, red-tiled farm, surrounded by its little coterie of dark, weather-beaten, moss-roofed barns, where the hay and the corn were stuffed to dry, while the cattle, Tantalus-like, stood stalled below, all through the long winter night.

Always, year after year, had the *Engelishmaend*, the fishing tenant of the river, lodged at Sivertsen's farm. Aslag, ever since she could remember, had brought them their early coffee in bed, before they sallied forth to fish, while the shadows of night still hung about the valley.

Why, therefore, did she hesitate a moment ere she lifted the latch of Crawford's door next morning, and why did her face crimson beneath its tan when he opened his eyes and looked up at her, standing there, bowl in hand, wishing him *guden-dag*?

The *Engelishmaend*, tall, handsome, fascinating, had broken in upon Aslag's daily round and common task—the minding her father's house, the charge of the motherless brood of brothers and sisters, the caring for old Mother Olga, *lagt*, or boarded out upon them (workhouses are not in Norway, and the aged poor are taken in in turn at the farms), and now so bedridden that she would never be moved on any more till she left her cupboard bed for the churchyard. To him, Aslag was but one more delightful item of a delightful holiday, hardly earned and altogether novel.

His was, for the time being, the river, and the river took, for the moment, first place in his life and thoughts. And no wonder, for the river was the soul of the valley. Its dull monotonous roar resounded from its birthplace—the still, green lake far up among the precipices, where the snow lay even on August noons and the blue-grey glaciers crept—all along the valley, as it whirled and tumbled over boulders, through chasms, answered by numberless pendent waterfalls, calling to it from the mountain-sides above, on and on, till it flung itself over the foss, and lay silent in the deep dark fiord, the scrubby alders nodding over its grave.

The river became Crawford's friend. He grew to know every pool

and every rapid in its short but varied course, and even the little tributary torrents, which, tamed by their mad leap from the mountain, were set, here and there, to turn the great wooden wheels of the tiny turf-roofed mill-houses. The river was above such work. It even chafed and groaned at the crazy plank bridge that joined Sivertsen's and Yri's farms.

Every morning about four Crawford sallied forth to fish, attended by Jacobus Yri, the gillie, who had been the guide, philosopher, and friend of every *Engelishmaend* since the fishing value of the stream had been first discovered.

Aslag, from the shadow of the doorway, house-broom in hand, her skirts tucked up, would furtively watch them go. Involuntarily she contrasted the two figures—Crawford, tall, well-dressed, well-looking, with a smile on his face, a whistle on his lip; Jacobus, older, short, thick, and stooping, with a dour weather-beaten face beneath his ugly squash hat, and an ungainly, weary gait.

Her heart tightened, and a strange, unknown misery stole over her, as she glanced across the bridge at the white face of Yri's farm, staring coldly at her from the scrubby hillside, and recollected that, ere the winter snow fell, she would be living there as Jacobus's wife.

Old Yri was the biggest farmer in the valley, the largest riparian owner, the one who made most profit out of the yearly leasing of the river. Hardly a girl on the fiord but would gleefully have changed places with Aslag, but not a girl on the fiord would have made Jacobus such a pretty bride!

About ten, when the sun grew hot, shining straight down into the valley, Crawford and Jacobus, laden or not, as the Fates had decreed, with their prey from the river, rods on their shoulders, gaff and landing-net in hand, took the homeward road to the farm. Such a scrap of a road! It took up what level ground the river had left in the valley, and ran three or four miles up into the mountains, connecting a farm or two at the lake-head with the miniature metropolis at the fiord head. Every few yards a sort of black tombstone, inscribed with yellow letters, met the eye, awakening in Crawford, ere he was initiated, as much curiosity as did the celebrated monolith discovered by Mr. Pickwick in the breasts of the members of the club. But it merely informed the wayfarer how many yards of road (for the fields in the valley were measured by yards) the adjacent landowner was bound to keep in repair. When landowner was not, and waste-land of scrub and rock intervened, the most grandmotherly of Governments stepped in and highway rates ensued.

Crawford would return to find a noontide lull brooding over the farm, and *spiese*, consisting of much of his own fish, with varieties of stewed berries, and several species, colours, and odours of cheese, awaiting him in the dim, low, panelled room, where Aslag, her yellow hair neatly braided, a snow-white kerchief folded across her black gown, stood ready to serve him.

After dinner, she would place a chair for him outside on the top of the steep stone steps, to the very head of which the winter snow would rise, and here Crawford would sit and smoke, while the children and dogs played around.

Quietly enough, for even the children were hardly cheery up the fiord—Erasmus, Johannes, Ingeborg, Olga, and Halmar—a quaint medley of Lutheran Reformation and old Norse saga names. Queer little, fair, bleached Dutch dolls they were, in close caps and skirts or trousers a world too wide for them, toddling gravely about, watching the agricultural operations of their female relatives and neighbours, blandly saluting the stranger with a gravity beyond their years, and enjoying most soberly their three months' holiday. They hardly ran and shouted as more southern children do. There is scant room for laughter in the life of a Norwegian peasant, one long struggle with Nature in her coldness and darkness, from the cradle to the grave. As far as Crawford could see, only the children and the quite young girls, like Aslag, were smooth and round and fair-skinned. At one bound all adults seemed to leap into middle age. But there was a wistful pathos in their grey eyes, as if of a hopeless longing for the brighter side of life, for more, for longer sunshine. Crawford wondered if they found it in the far-away States, where they drift to found whole settlements, or if, in time, the New Democracy would shed it over *Gamle Norge*?

The very dogs he found too quiet. Unclassable, of a setter or Eskimo ilk, and of a wonderfully confiding and affectionate disposition, they led too *dolce far niente* an existence to have a bark in them. Of a growl they had never known the necessity.

About the fiord and the valley, as Crawford surveyed them from the farmhouse door, in summer-time even, there seemed an absence of animal life. With a shudder, being of a cheery nature, he wondered what it must be like in winter. The ceaseless voices, as "cataract answered cataract from the hills," replaced the sound of singing birds. Pied water-wagtails cheeped feebly as they perked and strutted about the marshy meadowlets. Sparrows prattled under the eaves, and, on days when the wild sou'-wester was blowing out in the wide estuary, wearied gulls would sail up, serene and stately, showing white against the purple mountains, while their sardonic laughter would echo among the precipices. Away up in their mountain Capuas, the cattle, indeed, lowed faintly. But life with them was hard and toiling. The foals were, perhaps, the liveliest creatures on the fiord. To every cariole or low hay-trolley a dun-coloured mare. To every mare, somewhere abouts, never very far off, but here, there, and everywhere, scampering, kicking, whinneying, a foal, a cream-coloured mass of playfulness.

To pass the hours till the sun grew low, Crawford would entice Aslag from her haymaking or her household work to sit on the stone steps at his feet and talk to him, her pretty fair-haired curly head on a level with his hand, making him long to stroke it.

Gradually, as the days, and even weeks, wore on, and his Norse and

her English waxed more fluent, he learned something of her life in winter, when the night had come and no man could work. Summer is the busy season. So much to do, so little time to do it in. But in winter the people relax and unbend. There was visiting among the farms, she told him, when the valley was wrapped in a mantle of whiteness which would make it scarcely recognisable to his eyes, when the snow made crooked paths straight, and the head of the fiord itself became a highway, and all the torrents were mute. Only the subdued roar of the great foss breaks the winter silence.

Yet there is no lack of occupation—school for the children, spinning and weaving for the women, timber-cutting for the men. And then, the long hours of darkness, to the scrape of the fiddle, dancing in the large, low rooms. Such dancing—the intricate spring dance, which would warm even the frost-bitten!

"I should like to see you dance, Aslag," and Crawford looked down upon her tenderly.

The girl's face flushed and her eyes drooped beneath his gaze.

"Get up a dance for me to see before I go—in your costume, Aslag. You promised to let me see you in costume, you know," insinuatingly.

His idle hand stole dangerously near her head.

"We have no time to dance now," and still without raising her eyes she edged a little away.

"But just to please me, Aslag? I *do* want to see you dance; I'm sure you must look awfully pretty! (Ah! you don't understand me! Perhaps it's just as well; but it meant something nice though.) Just one dance before I leave. I am going away *soon*, Aslag!" and he bent over her.

"Ya! ya! I know—I know——"

Then she suddenly sprang to her feet. For Jacobus Yri, with the fishing gear, had come over the bridge and was approaching the door.

"The sun has gone in and it looks like rain. Will the Herr go out now? And will he fish up above from the bank, or shall I get the boat for the stream above the foss?"

Crawford rose and cast his eye round at the weather. Then he flung away his cigar and decided for the boat, where the stream ran wide and deep and slow between the pine wood, gathering itself together for its mighty plunge over the big foss into the fiord below.

That evening Aslag was up quite late, for her, hunting among the alder bushes by the river for a lost little delicate calf she was rearing by hand. In the late twilight she saw the fishers return and disappear into the house. As she turned homewards she found Jacobus coming to meet her, more *dour*, more forbidding-looking than ever.

"Aslag!" and he barred her way, struggling for words to express the feelings which were evidently surging in unaccustomed wildness beneath his sulky-looking exterior.

"Aslag!—the *verdamte Engelishmaend*! You know what I mean! I cannot bear it!"

"I don't know what you are talking about," she replied with a struggle for calmness. "Let me pass, Jacobus Yri."

He seized both her hands with an unusual access of passion in the sullen, stolid man, and his voice, naturally rough and strident, became quite rasping.

"You lie! You do! You let him make love to you—you my *braut*! Mother Olga tells me how you go on—and haven't I seen it myself?"

She wrenched herself away.

"And what if he does?" she cried with infinite scorn. "At any rate, he does not call me a liar!"

And she sprang away across some low *oel-beer* bushes.

"You shall pay for this, Aslag Sivertsen!" he roared after her. "I will throw him in the river—I will stab him from behind with his own gaff when he is throwing—I will—I——"

"You are mad, Jacobus Yri! You have been drinking!"

And she fled through the gathering gloom into the house.

She flung herself on her bed in a passion of tears. When, exhausted by crying, she grew calmer, she lay long staring up at the light sky of the summer night through the open little skylight in the roof.

"He makes love to me—even Jacobus notices it—does it mean he loves me?"

That was the burden of her cry, and she hid her face in her pillow in a frenzy of hope and fear.

"But Jacobus will kill him—Jacobus, once on the drink and angry! Ah! He is capable!" and she shuddered, having experience of her future husband's behaviour. "Oh, I must watch him!—must guard him!"

With this one thought she fell at last into a troubled sleep.

There were dark rings round her eyes and a troubled look on her face as she stood over the sleeping Crawford next dawn, with his coffee bowl in her hand. An infinite sadness, succeeding the torture of the night, overwhelmed her. She looked down upon him, lying there, so sound, so fast, till it seemed to her somehow as if he were dead—dead to her—as if all were over—all past.

She stooped gently, and kissed him slowly and softly on the cheek, as one kisses the dear dead. And he never stirred.

Yet he thought her manner a little strange and altered when she asked him later: "May I come fishing with you to-day?"

He seemed surprised. But his only thought was about his sport, for his time was drawing so short now.

"Oh, yes! Why? Oh, come along! Only you'll be quiet and not get in the way?"

She drew back coldly. She found him changed.

"You do not want me," and she slowly left the room, hoping, till she reached the very kitchen, that he would call her back.

That day they fished the upper river above the bridge, and more than

once Jacobus, but Jacobus only, was aware of a figure crouching amongst the *oel-beer* bushes, or hiding in the alder thickets or behind boulders, and knew that his every movement was being watched.

In the evening, after supper, Crawford noticed that the house was filling with people. Presently he detected the squeaking of a fiddle. Then the door was thrown suddenly open, and Aslag stood before him.

"If he cares for me, he shall care *now*!" she was saying to herself, with a rage in her heart born of wounded pride, which sent the blood to her face and the flash into her eyes.

She had dressed herself in the full national costume of the fiord—snowy lace-bordered apron, red jacket over white chemisette, embroidered gaily with beads. Her hair hung below her waist in two thick golden plaits. On her head she wore the glittering, jingling, heavy brass crown, on her bosom the brass and tinsel breastplate, and round her neck the quaint silver ornaments in which her grandparents for generations had been married.

Crawford sprang from the supper table and snatched his pipe out of his mouth.

"By Jove! what a transformation! Little Aslag looks like a queen!"

He came and stood over her, his hands in his pockets, a most admiring expression in his eyes.

"I have done what you asked," she said humbly and softly, with downcast eyes. Then, glancing up at him with a triumphant gleam, "Come and see me dance!"

She turned to lead the way, when there arose from the kitchen a shout.

"The bride! The bride! Where is the bride? The bride must begin!"

Crawford stopped short.

"The *bride*? What bride? Whose bride? Aslag! whose bride are you?"

She turned away her head and replied so low and stifled—

"The bride of Jacobus Yri."

"That oaf?—that ugly devil? Oh, come now! That's a shame!"

It was Jacobus himself who cut him short. He lumbered into the room and dragged Aslag out.

"He *does* care!" she murmured to herself, unresistingly suffering Yri to pull her along. Then, overwhelmed with pride and happiness, she plunged wildly into the intricate measure of the mad "spring dance."

The rest of the company caught the infection, and in an instant the low, rafted room was full of a jumping, whirling mass of white-neckerchiefed heads and dark fustian with red patches of waistcoats. But Crawford, lolling smoking against the door-post, saw only Aslag in her glittering crown.

An hour later and the company were dispersing across the bridge.

The air was full of *guden nachts*. Old Sivertsen and his son-in-law that was to be were endeavouring to set upon his homeward way the wearied fiddler, overcome with his exertions and with the beer with which he had been plied to sustain him.

Crawford found Aslag on the top of the steps, glittering under the stars of the summer night.

"You liked my dancing?" and she looked up at him with shining eyes.

For all answer he flung his arm round her and kissed her—once, twice, thrice—on hair, on cheek, on lips!

"In England it is always allowed to kiss the bride!" he laughed.

But she fled from him trembling and rushed up to her room. Seizing her crown, she dragged it off and flung it jingling on the ground.

"The bride! The bride!" she moaned to herself, her lips trembling with rage. "He kissed me—but only as the bride! Oh, I will *never* be a bride! Never!" and she kicked the crown till it jingled on the floor.

There was a low whistle at the window. She stood motionless a moment, listening, hesitating.

"No! He may call, but I will not answer. He does *not* care—he laughed—he called me 'the bride!'"

Then suddenly she heard her name called out of the darkness, and started.

She had recognised Jacobus's voice, thick with beer and rage.

"I saw you!" he cried, flinging a vile word at her. "I saw you! And I'll be even with him yet!" as he shrunk away unsteadily with an oath.

Aslag forgot all her anger in her fear.

"Ah, me!" she moaned, covering her face with her hands, and rocking herself miserably to and fro. "I have betrayed myself and him and gained nothing! Now he will be lost unless I can watch and save him!"

The next day was Sunday. What was more, it was a Sunday to be observed by a service in church, an event happening only once every three weeks up this lonely fiord. The priest was coming. Crawford decided that he would go to church and see what was to be seen.

He invited Aslag to accompany him. But the girl made some excuse and delayed. So Crawford started with old Sivertsen and the tribe of younger children, all quaintly dressed in dark Sunday clothes amply allowing for future growth, and each armed with a psalter, which they carried wrapped up in a handkerchief and deposited in a little white-wood box ornamented with poker-work.

The whole population of the fiord, except the absolutely bedridden, turned out to go to church. From far up on the purple mountains the kerchiefed dairy maidens had deserted their *sætters*, up where the *oel-beeren* and the *multi-beeren* grow. From the lonely cottages, the

isolated farms round the lake, hemmed in by the giant snow feldt overhead, tramped down the people solemnly, in groups of four and five. Round the shores and headlands of the fiord glided the quaint double-prowed boats, copies of Viking ships of yore, and by eleven o'clock the entire population that was locomotive had gravitated to the white-painted little wooden cruciform church with the slate dome down by the shore.

The Sivertsen party hung about with the rest round the lych-gate and in the churchyard, awaiting the priest. There was much greeting and handshaking, and not a little gossip in harsh, monotonous, unmusical tones, as the congregation sat smoking on the low stone wall, or loitered among the black wooden crosses or white tilted slabs, where the grass grew rank, the last crop of hay yet uncut. There was hardly a laugh, a shout, or a gesture. The people looked expressionless, sad, and weatherbeaten.

The priest came by water. His was a vast parish, scattered wide over mountain, sea, and lake, though its population numbered only three thousand souls, and his comfortable *priester gaarde*, with its snug farm-buildings, lay miles away down the fiord. He passed under the weather-stained lych-gate, through a bowing, handshaking, respectful throng, and entered the damp mouldy little church. The deep porch was crowded with women, with children of too tender an age to be trusted to behave with decorum within, and also with the umbrellas of the congregation. An umbrella is a great feature of life in Norway, where it rains or snows every two days out of three. Some of these had slipped down and their handles were visible from the churchyard, protruding through the crack between the floor and the plank wall into the rank grass without. There seemed no means of warming the building, and it struck the Englishman that in winter church-going must be a somewhat severe devotional exercise.

Sivertsen ushered Crawford into a high pew on the right, the men's side of the church, and hung up their hats with the others, chiefly peaked cloth caps and wide-awakes, which were stuck all up the aisle on the peeled boughs of trees attached to the pews for the purpose.

Crawford looked curiously about him. As churches go in a land where all architecture is of wood, and burning the fate of every structure, this little out-of-the-way church was counted old. The reredos was a floridly-painted scrolled piece of carving, bearing at the top, below the initials of the donor, a date of the later half of the last century. Moses with his law-table, Aaron with his lamb, flanked either side of an altarpiece of the Crucifixion. Below, upon the Table, stood two lights in tall brass candlesticks, and the altarcloth of white calico was adorned with much cheap lace and red twill. Round the church hung an odd collection of oil paintings. Above the chancel screen, facing the altar, smirked in powder and patches and pearls the wife of the priest who had built the church. By her side hung her husband and son in brocaded waistcoats, but

the great Reformer himself, severe, smooth-faced, and portly, in black gown and bands, was relegated to a side place over the precentor's pew. A daub of the "Woman Taken in Adultery" hung, an unnecessary warning in a land of most moral matrons, above the women's benches.

Now entered the choirmen, headed by the precentor, who was also the schoolmaster, and settled themselves on either side the chancel. The priest, arrayed in white surplice and quaint Geneva ruff, emerged from the vestry and said a prayer at the altar kneeling. Then he stalked down the church into the porch, a tall and stately figure, with intellectual brow and dignified mien, his long grey hair brushed back, and the picturesque ruff, the present of the congregation upon his induction, setting off his fine head. No peasant priest this, but evidently a man in every way superior to the people over whom the king had set him.

Finding it the fashion to move about, Crawford followed a goodly part of the congregation to the porch to see what was happening.

The priest had gone to meet two or three mothers bearing swaddled bundles of babies, with each of whom he shook hands gravely. Then, there at the church door, as used to be the custom in England, he read over them the churching service, the 116th Psalm and others, the women standing.

Then the priest went back to the altar, and as Crawford turned to follow him, he perceived two late-comers walking through the lych-gate. They were Aslag and Jacobus. The former, flushed and anxious, was hurrying. The latter tried to linger as long as possible. He did not present a pleasant appearance.

"Been drinking again!" was Crawford's mental comment. "Just what they told me! What a pity, and such a good gillie, too!"

Aslag slipped past him into the women's benches, and the service proceeded—chiefly long psalms, droned to Tate and Brady tunes, without any musical accompaniment, Lessons read by the precentor from the chancel steps, the Epistle and Gospel for the day read from the altar by the minister, and some sentences intoned by the latter to a sort of Gregorian tone. Of prayers there seemed none.

The congregation stood or sat at its own sweet will and sang lustily. When the performance began to pall a little, they wandered out to smoke and gossip in groups in the churchyard, whither also the babies from the porch were taken when they waxed too vociferous.

Crawford followed the example. A whiff of the fiord breeze was pleasant after the mouldy church.

Aslag looked up from her psalm-book as he passed down the aisle. After a swift glance at the men's benches to see if Jacobus was looking (but he was fast asleep in a corner of the high-backed pew, snoring calmly), she smiled at Crawford, a little wistfully, the latter thought.

"Poor little girl!" he said to himself. "Far too pretty to be wasted on that beast!"

But a pipe, and a slight drizzle that began, auguring well for the morrow's sport, banished any further gloomy thoughts.

Returning to the church, he found the babies being christened. A row of parents and sponsors were standing at the chancel steps, just inside which was the font, a stone pedestal surmounted by a pewter basin. Then followed the "going to the altar."

The tapers were lit, and the priest donned a chasuble of crimson plush with a cross of gold braid, the most elaborate vestment the village could afford. At the offertory a quaintly-embroidered cone-shaped collecting-bag was passed round, hanging from a stick, with a bell at the point, to arouse the slumbering and stimulate the stingy. Then came the sermon.

The pastor, arrayed in black gown and white ruff, mounted the lofty pulpit, which was carved and painted like the reredos, and contained a black-letter Bible in old Norse. Here he held forth for some hour and a half, and the people settled themselves in their uncomfortable seats to enjoy their one intellectual entertainment.

But the Englishman fled. He went for a ramble up the mountain-side, picking *multi-beeren*, and enjoying the wide view of hill and fiord, on this, almost his last day in Norway. For his holiday had come to an abrupt end. A letter that morning had recalled him on business to London. Three days later and he must be at Bergen to catch the Hull steamer.

All that afternoon it drizzled hopelessly, and Crawford sat and wrote up arrears of letters. From time to time he was disturbed by sounds of altercation from the kitchen, where Jacobus had been dining, and was evidently making himself none too agreeable.

A little later he met Aslag, much perturbed, rushing up to her room.

"What's the matter?" He seized both her hands and caught her. "Poor little girl! Has that tipsy brute been bullying you? Shall I punch his head?"

She did not half understand his words, but his eyes spoke sympathy. She burst into tears, and freeing herself from his grasp, fled, whispering—

"Hush! He will kill you if he finds you with me!"

And indeed Jacobus's face, peering at them through the crack of the kitchen-door, was not pleasant to look upon.

It was little Ingeborg who brought Crawford's coffee next morning in her elder sister's place, and took the order to Jacobus to prepare the boat, as Crawford intended, after the rain of the previous day, to fish from it the pools above the foss.

Master and man made their way across the meadows and then plunged into the pine-wood, which here skirted both sides of the river. It was early yet, the sun not up, and under the trees it was still very gloomy. Nothing appeared quite awake except the foss, roaring sul-
lenly through the trees.

Jacobus seemed more than ordinarily sulky and unpleasant. Crawford did not like his manner at all. He remembered Aslag's warning, but the next moment he laughed at himself for heeding it.

All the same he made some excuse for getting his gillie to walk by his side, instead of close behind him through the narrow path under the trees. That glittering gaff had an ugly look. Yet he called himself a coward for noticing it. Is not an Englishman a match for at least two natives anywhere?

Once or twice Crawford thought he detected a dark figure flitting near them in the gloom under the pine-trees. He could not help fancying they were being followed, and asked Jacobus if he saw anything. But the gillie only shook his head and swore gutturally.

But when they reached the river-bank, there was Aslag sitting waiting for them in the boat!

"I am going with you," she said very quietly but firmly, and even in the uncertain light Crawford could not help noticing how set and white was her face. "I will be quiet and give no trouble. Do you mind?"

He felt so sorry for her that he would have done anything to please her.

"Mind! Do!—come along. It will be jolly! Yri," in an authoritative tone which admitted of no contradiction, "Aslag comes fishing with me. Pay out the boat."

Now the method of fishing the stream just above the foss, where it was too wide and deep and swift to admit of wading, and its banks too steep and wooded to allow of a line being thrown from them, was as follows:—

With some labour a boat had been *portaged* up from the fiord, and was kept behind a rock at the spot where the river, after its mad race over boulders and rapids, pulled itself together, as it were, before taking its final leap over the foss into the fiord.

A rope was fastened to either end of the boat and held by the gillie on the bank. Thus, without any movement of oars, which might have scared the fish, it was easily manoeuvred in the strong current, and kept out of danger among the rocks, or risk of being swept over the waterfall.

Jacobus cast the pair off into mid-stream. Crawford ran out his line and began to throw in likely places, where the eddy whirled round a sunken rock.

For a long time neither spoke. Crawford was too busy, and Aslag, prone at the stern, was watching him.

Every now and then, when they had got to the end of their tether, Jacobus, at a signal from his master, hauled up the boat in order to let them swirl down-stream again.

It was on one of these upward passages that Crawford broke the long silence.

"Bother!" he exclaimed, scowling at his fly. "I made sure that

would take. But the *heckam-peckam* don't seem any good this morning. Just my luck, and my last day!"

"I have not brought you luck!" sadly murmured Aslag from the stern.

"Come, don't say that, little girl!" he replied cheerily, and smiling at her.

"It is your last day?"

"Yes, I must take the steamer to-morrow night, or I shall miss the boat at Bergen."

There was a long pause, during which Aslag sat gazing fixedly down, down into the green depths of the waters which swirled so fast around them.

"You will return next summer?" she asked in a little low, far-away voice.

"Return? Oh, yes! No—I mean not here."

"Not here?" in a tone of suppressed anguish.

"Why, no! Didn't I tell you? I've hired another, a longer river, up the Sogne fiord. Why, what a murderous-looking knife! What are you doing with it, Aslag?"

Somehow Crawford's nerves did not seem very steady that morning. Yet it was only the common pocket-knife of the country, cased in its wooden sheath, and such as every peasant eats his bread and cheese with.

"Oh, nothing! I mean—perhaps—carving my initials on the gun-wale here."

"Add mine, in memory of to-day. That jealous old Yri can't see," he laughed.

"But what shall I put? I do not even know your name," sadly.

He paused in his throw and came and stood over her, looking down upon her with a smile. The sun, which had just climbed the mountain-top, came glinting down through the pine-wood, and a ray shimmered on her golden head as she looked up at him. She made a pretty picture.

"'Arthur——' A. C. and A. S. But you will have changed yours before we meet again!"

She did not reply, but rose and moved past him to the other end of the boat.

"Take care!" he cried, as it gave a sudden swerve, and he seized her hand to steady her.

"How cold you are, Aslag, and how your hand trembles! Let me warm it for you."

But she shook her head sadly and drew it gently from his grasp.

"Here is a better place to carve it, at this end," she said, sitting down. "But aren't you going to throw? Look at that ripple!"

His line shot out.

"What would you like for a wedding-present, Aslag?" he asked presently, but without turning his head and his eyes fixed on his line.

"I'd like to give you something nice, Aslag—a little remembrance of our jolly time here together," he added, reeling slowly in.

"Eh! Aslag?" He turned. She was bending over the prow of the boat.

"There is no need for wedding-presents," she replied. "I am not going to be married."

Crawford paused, thunderstruck, and let his line drift aimlessly.

"Eh? What? Not get married? Why, Aslag? Why not?"

Then she lifted her head and looked at him, a world of meaning in her eyes.

"Can *you* ask?"

"Aslag!"

But the boat, caught in a sudden eddy, gave an abrupt swerve, and, without a moment's warning, the rope at either end parted.

Jacobus, standing on the bank, was pitched headlong backward on the rocks by the sudden release of the strain of the rope.

When he picked himself up, he saw Crawford and Aslag standing, locked in each other's arms, and whirled along, oarless and rudderless, past all human aid, by the hurrying current of the relentless river, on towards the foss, whose mighty roar seemed to his terrified ears to swell and swell, louder and louder, till it resounded deafeningly through the funereal pines.

Out in the bay, at the next tide, they found a plank or two and a seat. But no more.

The fiord holds the secret of the foss.

EDITH E. CUTHELL.

THE LADY OF LISLE

A LITTLE way out of Drew Royal, on the gently-sloping road that leads down to Marrabridge, lies the village of Lisle. At a distance of scarcely more than a stone's throw from the highway; hidden behind a clump of dense and dismal fir-trees, so that you will not see it, or indeed catch a glimpse even of its tower till you shall have outskirted them, there is a church. Here the neighbours of many generations—a motley crew of friends and foes, if truth be told—side by side have been laid to rest, beneath the shadow of stone walls hardly less rugged than the tenor of their little varied lives. It was here that I loitered awhile some few days since, more from an idle habit than for any definite reason, but partly too that I might ascertain how far the nature of mortal things had here asserted itself since last I had been at the pains of unlatching the churchyard gate.

Here, as in some other places, but they are few and far between, Time is sparing of his scars. Now and again, as it appeared, the storms of a violent winter had tried to clear a path through the dark and gloomy copse, but without any very conspicuous success. The lichens at the porch were scarce increased these twenty years, and save that the grass grew ranker, it was hard to trace any changes. The sense of my own experiences passed from me; I trod the crooked path that wound towards the church amongst familiar emblems of the departed; I recognised my old acquaintances and was young again.

The day wore towards evening. There was hardly a leaf stirring, scarcely a sound on the air, but in the corner under the wall the gravedigger whistled at his work. I sat under a gaunt stone that guarded the remains of Jesse Crowfoot, and of Elizabeth his wife. I noted that they had come out of great tribulation, and that their children had arisen and called them blessed. Around me the flowers were radiant in the sun, which sank gradually from the blue, and strangely enough rolled away the mists of the years.

The people of Lisle were a homely folk. That I came among them and busied myself with pen and pencil in their midst, was at first a mystery, and for some little time an annoyance. There were not a few who feared the evil eye. But after awhile the terms of a general friendship between myself and the cottagers were secured, which contributed largely to the fund of my pleasure and amusement. A thousand old-world traditions survived to add a wonderful charm to the little place, with its crazy dwellings, its crooked streets, and its unaffected people.

It was the last day of a glorious April that I remember, with the day following, more vividly than any time or experience in my life.

The wealth of the woods that year was beyond description or calculation, and the heat was that of summer. A light breeze blew from the sea across the land, so that the air was fresh. The people were preparing with zest for their May festival, and the sky was bright with a promise of fair weather.

My own part in the proceedings could only be that of a spectator, but I was not suffered to remain within doors. I must join in the gossip and anticipations of my friends. If I could do nothing more, it behoved me at least to exhibit some interest, some pleasure in the bustle of the place. This indeed I was not unwilling to do, for a sign of life in Lisle was near akin to a miracle. The particular activities in which the people now began to indulge did not, on account of their sentimentality, their romance, their phantasy, surprise me. Such things are grown more uncommon now, yet I should look for them still in so remote a spot, and be truly disappointed if I did not find them. At that period, however, I was in the flush of youth, and they were matters of course. I watched many a maiden weaving flowers into a garland; if occasionally I lent a hand to the twisting or twining, my help did not appear unwelcome. The old, too, were busy, many with precept, many with example. It should not be said that May-day in Lisle had fallen from its ancient glory. Among the lads of the village the laughter was boisterous, and the hammers rang proudly as their arches rose all down the street, and transformed it into an arcade, presently embowered in green and crowned with flags and blossoms. At the old cross by the church they made a throne, and before that they set a footstool, and strewed the green carpet before it with buds and leaves. No one was idle. I found opportunity, however, to gather scraps of information here and there, and passed in and out among the people, meeting with nothing but smiles from those, and they were many, who were busily engaged.

Thus it was not unnatural that I should wake early on the following morning. Dew was thick on the grass in the meadows when I first wandered through them. By the haze and mist that arose, and by the dull grey of the sky above, I foresaw the likelihood of a brilliant day. And so it proved.

Lisle was early astir again. A truce had been proclaimed to everything but merrymaking; the forge and the anvil were silent, and only the bell-ringers found cause to perspire. Many a sketch I made of youth and age in holiday garb: I have them still. Some of the rhymes that were sung are echoing yet, with musical cadences, in my ears: they never reflected any deep emotion, and their burden was of the simplest. But I shall not forget them, even if I should live to excel the proudest, whitest veteran of them all in years and wisdom.

So noonday came. A thrill went through the populace. I could not help recalling the sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, which had been solemnly rolled forth from the ancient story in

the church three days before, and ever since had held high revels in my brain. A flag flew from the tower, and its folds revealed their gaudy colours freshly with every gust of wind; the blare of many trumpets sounded from every quarter; dressed in their finest the women laughed and jested, not only with one another, and all went merrily.

I asked an old man who was standing gazing thoughtfully at a bower in the arches,—his son's handiwork,—what it was that made Lisle celebrate its May-day with this completeness. He looked deeply at me before replying.

"And why not?" he said. "Here be reasons. First, it ever was so, ever since I were so high." He bent down to indicate his littleness then.

"And then!" he added, raising his voice, "here is reason two. We be but poor folk here in Lisle. We'd not a zole to care for we, till the Lady came."

"The Lady?" I inquired.

"Saving the presence of your honour, not a zole," he said, shaking his white head. "And now, come Heester, come Michaelmas, come Christmas, there she be, for help, for kindness, for favours—all you will."

"But who is she?"

"Ay, ay, who indeed? An angel from the heavens, I says. She lives to herself, she do, and does her good by stealth,—that's true. But May-day out she comes. Yes, out she comes, and we hear her words, good words as she speaks, an' we do her honour, an' make her Queen o' May."

"And this lady, whence does she come?"

"It were years ago," he said contemplatively, "an' she came fro' Lunnon: yes, away from that great place, though I never warn't there, not I myself. An' there she do live now,—there in the Red House."

He pointed to a roof that just showed itself distantly through a gap in the trees. "An' she rolls in a sight of money, an' jools, an' gran' things. Then o' May-day she comes forth, all crowned with dimons, an' gewgaws, an' fine splendours—on my zole—grand, grand!"

"An' gives 'em away a May-day," he added with enthusiasm. "Yes, yes, it's coals at Christmas, an' it's fruits and pleasurings for summer-time—but it's dimons in the May!"

"But tell me," I said, "this lady, does she live all alone?"

"Ay, ay; but there's those as looks up to her. Ole John, and women to see to the house, an' all that."

"A widow, I suppose?"

"That's as may be," said the old man dubiously. "But surely she should be here by this."

The people were on the tiptoe of expectation. It was explained to me that she was well past her time. And all was ready to make a real Queen of her. Her own bounty would do the rest.

But time wore on, and still she did not come, whilst the gathered

crowd began to grow a little impatient and disappointed. An hour slipped by. I suggested to my old friend that we should go up to the Red House and see if anything had happened. He hesitated. It seemed he thought that such a course would savour of impertinence to royalty. But something should be done, I said. If the lady's presence was necessary to the festival, they ought not to let the day slip by like this. Then if she were ill, she might send a message. At last he was convinced, and without any apparent intention we set off together. We could hear the buzz of many voices, we could see the whole village brilliant with every colour of the rainbow, as we passed through the copse and up the hill towards the house.

We had passed in at the lodge-gate, and could see the door of the house at the end of the avenue. And just then some one came out at the door. We heard a shrill voice, and saw that there were several people making their way down the path. We watched the group. The central figure was marvellously dressed, and I could not help thinking, and the more fully as I could see her plainly, that if this were a Queen, her raiment was that of stage royalty: flashy and splendid, but hardly harmonious as to colour. In the sun her head-dress glittered with jewels, and her bodice was encrusted with precious stones—"dimons an' rub-eyes" the old man called them as this vision of grandeur came into view.

My old friend was unwilling to approach very close, but I urged him, and we went on together. It now became clear that the May-Queen was in no haste to come. Her attendants were trying persuasion, cajolery, threats even, as I thought.

We were quite near to her now. She was a truly remarkable figure. Her dress was of brilliant green silk, set off with tawdry finery and party-coloured ribbons, and her head was crowned with a huge bonnet of the strangest shape. She fairly blazed with jewels, but whether real or false I found myself unable to discern, for in any case their brilliancy must have dazzled my eyes, though they looked utterly out of place in the sunshine. Then I studied her face. She screamed incoherently as she caught my gaze. I thought her mad. My companion simply gaped and stood stock-still.

I realised that her speech was nothing but a volley of imprecations. Her face wore an unnatural flush. The servants tried to hush and calm her, but she lifted up her voice, cursing them and me. Then one of them—"Ole John"—seeing that all efforts were unavailing, approached me and implored me to go.

"She is far too ill for the Maying," I said. "I will tell the people."

"Ill!" said the old fellow testily; "it is nothing; it will pass off."

But I persuaded him. I assisted them to get her back to the house. Her breath told the tale which these people would have denied. Her face still bore the traces of beauty through the paint and powder, but I could not but shrink from her foulness as we lifted her. It was the foulness of a woman in drink.

We laid her on the couch, and then she became quieter. I was just turning to go when John touched me on the arm.

"What'll you say?" he asked, his voice trembling, as he looked down at his mistress beneath the eyelids.

"That she is ill," I said.

He nodded.

"Far too ill to come," I added.

The old man gave a sigh of relief. Then he bent towards a table close at hand and took from it a small box. "If you would give this out, and from her, it would be well," he said.

I looked into the box. It seemed to contain a number of trinkets. "Surely these are of value," I said.

But he would take no denial, and so I consented.

The people hailed us gladly when we returned to them. I made a short harangue. I told them that the lady was too ill to come, but sent this message. I held up the trinkets amid murmurs of delight. Then I proposed that they should elect a May-Queen themselves, and maidens to attend on her, and that among these the trinkets should be divided. The election pleased them much, and certainly the girl they chose—Natty Wise—was very pretty. I thoroughly enjoyed the office of crowning her, with which they invested me. And no one seemed to grudge the others their jewels. They finished the ceremony with cheers for their mysterious benefactor, and merriment lasted right through the afternoon until night fell. In after years I often wondered on May-day what had become of the Lady Lisle.

The air grew chilly in the churchyard, and I thought of going homewards. The gravedigger had gone from his place under the wall. But I was obliged to halt before I reached the lych-gate. A little procession came up the path.

The coffin was followed only by two people, an old man and a woman of middle age, both of them sombre in their shabby attire. I stood and watched them as they passed to the open grave.

At the corner outside the churchyard I saw a little girl. She was crying. I asked her what was the matter, kindly.

"There'll be no more Mayin' in Lisle for us all," she said.

ARTHUR DAWSON.

IN THE WIND

BY J. CUTHBERT HADDEN

WHAT'S in the wind?

Why the war, of course: always the war, and nothing but the war. Luckily the literary man doesn't need to talk about the war; that is left for the journalist, who may or may not be a literary man. Mr. Andrew Lang wrote to the *Scotsman* the other day declaring himself, in effect, a pro-Boer. Whereupon the editor of the *Scotsman* told Mr. Andrew Lang that he and his kind were quite incapable of understanding such intricate political problems as that which confronts us in the Transvaal. I hope Mr. Lang is properly thankful that he has the journalists to keep him right. Bless the journalists! I don't know how the poor old world would get along without them. May they live for ever! Meanwhile, some of the literary men, not caring to write directly about the war, are taking to themes which bear indirectly upon it. For example, here comes a man with a serious essay intended to prove that poets have always been, if not actual wielders of the sword themselves, at least delighted to see it wielded by others. I am afraid it is impossible to uphold the contention. Long ago, of course, when they were paid solely with pudding and praise, poets went into the battle with their patrons, of whose achievements they sang in the best extempore rhymes they could command. But our modern poets, however they may have liked to sing in warlike strains the achievements of others, have seldom been among the "braw fechtters" themselves. One remembers, of course, Ben Jonson's little affair with Gabriel Spenser, the actor, which brought his neck so nearly within the hangman's noose. Chaucer, again, saw service under Edward III. in France, and may have helped to besiege Paris in 1360; and everybody knows how Coleridge, when an undergraduate at Cambridge, suddenly enlisted in the Light Dragoons under the most unpoetical name of Silas Titus Comberbach. But these were exceptions. Your typical poet prefers to sit at home at ease, like the gentlemen of England in the song; and in any case the multitude must not be deprived of their notion that the poet-personality is a composite photograph of Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Tennyson—a conglomeration of sick-room dreaminess, stormy revolt, and an excessive habit of tobacco. The multitude wants no poetical "Christopher North" knocking down brawlers in market squares, and pitching unruly spectators out of the pit at the theatres.

* * *

Another theme which has been engaging attention as remotely connected with the war is the history of "God save the Queen" and "Rule, Britannia." I am not going to say a word about "God save the Queen," which is too mediocre a production to make the question of its authorship a matter of the slightest moment. But "Rule, Britannia" is really a good thing—Southey said it would be "the political hymn of this country as long as she maintains her political power"—and I think it a great pity that any doubt should exist as to the name of the man who wrote it. The difficulty about the authorship arose in this way. "Rule, Britannia" appeared first in the masque of *Alfred*, written conjointly by David Mallet and James Thomson in 1740. Neither of the writers thought it worth while to indicate his individual share in the masque, and it is from this circumstance that all the doubt has arisen in regard to the authorship of the ode. The general opinion is rather in favour of Thomson—the Jemmy Thomson who wrote of "The Seasons," and so far bore out the character of his own "Castle of Indolence," that he used to stand at a peach tree, with both hands in his pockets, eating the fruit as it grew! Very little, I fear, can be said in favour of Mallet and his claim. Indeed Mallet survives only because he aroused the hatred of Dr. Johnson, though, being a Scotsman, that was really nothing in his disfavour. Mallet's name was originally Malloch, but when he came to London from Edinburgh he found that the Cockneys were unequal to the guttural, and not desiring to be addressed as Malloch, he called himself Mallet. That is the usual explanation of the change of name, but Johnson declared that he called himself Mallet because he was ashamed of his nationality. Tom Moore says that it was Johnson's hatred of this venal hack scribbler from Edinburgh that led him in his Dictionary to define the word "mallet" as "a thing with a wooden head." However this may have been—and I don't see anything wrong with the definition—Johnson certainly had a tilt at Mallet when he came to define the word "alias." For this was how he put it: "Alias, otherwise; as Mallet *alias* Malloch." Whether poor Mallet really had any share in the authorship of "Rule, Britannia" I am not prepared to say. Nor, I fancy does anybody care very much who wrote the ode. Wagner said that the whole character of the British nation is expressed in the opening strain of the tune; and assuredly the British nation seems at present to find a very lively satisfaction in shouting itself hoarse while proclaiming that Britannia rules the waves, that Britons "never, never, never shall be slaves," and giving utterance to all the fine sentiments that make our bosoms swell with patriotic pride. What matters it to the *bourgeois* Briton whether he sings the words of David Mallet or those of Jemmy Thomson? Words are to him no more than they were to Hamlet.

* * *

Curiously enough, "Rule, Britannia" was one of the airs which that eccentric divine, the Rev. Rowland Hill, put to practical use in

illustration of his well-known contention that the devil should not have all the best tunes. We are wont to condemn the Salvation Army—and rightly, from my point of view—for the way in which it puts secular airs to what by courtesy may be called sacred uses, but it is only right to admit that the same thing was done by serious-minded ecclesiastics long before General Booth thought of doing it. I have myself heard the tune of “Robin Adair” sung to a hymn in a Church of England service, and you must not suppose that I am a grey-bearded veteran. But I am forgetting Rowland Hill: not only did he adopt the tune of “Rule, Britannia,” but he parodied the words to make a hymn. Look at this:

“When Jesus first, at Heaven’s command,
Descended from His azure throne,
Attending angels join’d His praise,
Who claimed the kingdoms for His own.
Hail, Immanuel! Immanuel we’ll adore,
And sound His fame from shore to shore.”

I confess I should not feel very devout if I were set to sing these words to Dr. Arne’s spirited air. But other times other feelings. Rowland Hill, as everybody knows, was the minister of Surrey Chapel, Blackfriars Road, and I read recently that this precious parody used to be sung regularly “with great heartiness” by the vast congregations who worshipped there. On the 4th of December 1803, in particular, it was sung by “a crowded congregation of volunteers who had enrolled themselves in view of the threatened invasion of this country by the great Napoleon.” So! We talk about the patriotism of those latter days as if it were a new thing. That it is no new thing is clear enough when we remember that 341,600 sons of Britain voluntarily offered to defend these shores against “old Bony.” Would as many volunteer to defend us against the French now?

* * *

That is a comforting theory which a medical authority promulgates in regard to early rising. I always did have a difficulty in explaining to myself why anybody should want to get up at unearthly hours in the morning. Of course I know all about the early bird and the worm, but surely there is more than one worm, and in any case I have never been madly jealous of the early bird’s peculiar privilege. Besides, birds get up early, as dogs bark and fight, because “’tis their nature to.” Johnson declared that Burton’s “Anatomy of Melancholy” was the only book that tempted him out of bed in the morning, but why, if he wanted to read Burton so badly, he should not have read him beneath the blankets it is impossible to explain. The Jemmy Thomson, about whom we were speaking a little way back, used to read with his arms through a couple of holes in the bedclothes, and Johnson might have done the same and said nothing about it. The theme, I know, is as hackneyed as it is painful, and I am not going to moralise

upon it, especially as the warm weather is coming—is it?—when one finds it easier to be virtuous in the matter of early rising. I only want to point out that, according to the afore-mentioned medical authority, the man who goes to bed late and lies late, who, like Falstaff, always hears the chimes at midnight, has a greater chance of achieving health than the man who rises with the lark. This, of course, is quite opposed to the philosophy of our grandmothers as taught in the familiar rhyme; and I am sorry to note that nothing is said about wealth and wisdom. Possibly the medical authority did not extend his investigations sufficiently far to ascertain the effect of hours upon the pocket and the brain; but Minerva's owl was a midnight bird, so we may concede him wisdom although wealth should certainly come to him who is earliest at work. If the medical profession go on at this rate they will soon have reversed the old mode of living, and made all that was ever dangerous, efficacious and safe. Quite recently in an English book on this subject it was shown that long lived were nearly all persons who habitually abstained from baths. It only remains now to be proved that all long lived were addicted to indulgence in indigestible foods, never took medicines in spring, and neglected all the elementary precautions of hygienics, for the new system to be complete.

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Why has the world never seen a great lady musical composer? That is the question which has recently been agitating a section of the musical profession. I haven't read all that the various writers have said on the subject, but that doesn't matter. Plato, without the prophetic vision which would have enabled him to foresee the "new woman," said long ago that the world was right in maintaining the general inferiority of the female sex. Nearer our own time Schopenhauer gave the statement a particular application when he asserted that the most distinguished intellects among the whole sex "have never managed to produce a single achievement in the fine arts that is really great, genuine, and original, or given the world any work of permanent value in any sphere." And in these very days, to crown all, Professor Lombroso has dispensed with the female genius in any form by propounding the theory that all the noted women of the world have been men at heart! Which of these views, if any, are taken by the present-day musicians I have not sought to find out. You see it is an old, old question this of why we have never had a female Bach or a female Beethoven. I have myself been told that a female Beethoven is an impossibility, because no woman can ever have the physical strength which must be co-existent with such a creative genius. It has been hinted to me that women haven't the largeness of soul necessary in a great musical genius. And, above all, I have been constantly reminded that love and matrimony are such engrossing factors in the life of the sex that no time or thought can be given

to anything else. One old writer says that great heights are not for women owing to "the element of the love life," for which alone he declares that woman is destined; another remarks that dress, vanity, adulation, beauty, most of all sentiment and a pre-natal arrangement that they must marry, forbid women excelling in art. Alas! I am afraid it is too true. Musical young ladies we have in abundance. Probably some of them might develop into geniuses, but they get married and quite new interests arise. According to Pope, the proper study of mankind is man, and I have no doubt that the average married woman finds the study "proper" enough to engage most of her time and consideration. I am married myself!

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Dr. Johnson, according to Bozzy, had "a contempt for the notion that the weather affects the human frame." An American scientist has been discussing the question of whether it affects conduct and character. The discussion is surely superfluous, though the Yankee has certainly got at some curious facts, if indeed they are facts. Thus he says that "unseasonably hot" days in spring and autumn always bring with them the largest number of assaults by men. The total of persons being disciplined in penitentiaries, too, is greatest during periods of excessive temperature. Bank clerks, again, make more mistakes in fine weather than in foul. In the fine weather they are disposed to be over-confident; in the foul weather they feel as if they were *likely* to make mistakes, and so exercise greater care. The American's inquiry is capable of infinite extension. Thus one might ask whether he has more chance of getting a woman to say "Yes" when it is freezing than when it is fresh. Statistics might be collected to show at what season of the year a man has the greatest tendency to murder his mother-in-law. Whether a man drinks more to keep himself cool during the summer than during the winter to keep himself warm, would also be an interesting subject for investigation. What the precise effect of a blizzard is upon a man's language; what is the most suitable kind of day upon which to ask for the loan of a ten-pound note; how a cold, drizzly morning affects a woman's temper when she wants to walk abroad in a new blouse; how a deluge of rain makes a man feel who has gone out with his gun on the 12th of August—these and a hundred other inquiries suggest themselves. For myself, I have not the slightest doubt about the weather affecting conduct and character. Paul could never have almost persuaded Agrippa to be a Christian in a London fog.

